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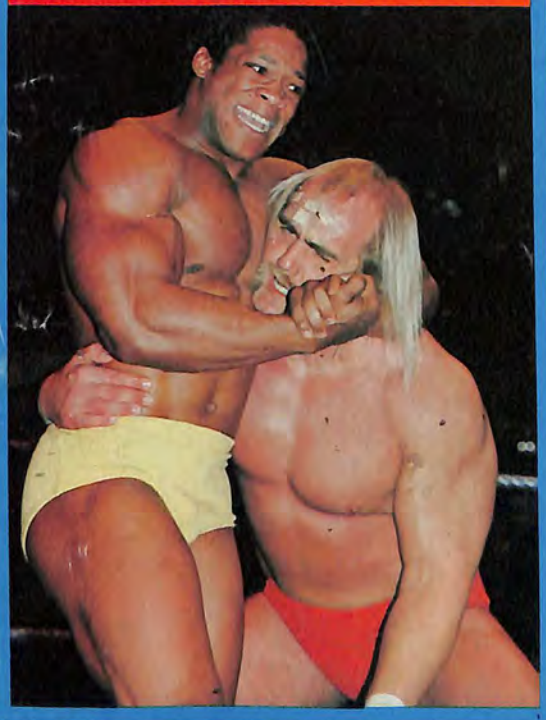

The Experts Disagree:
CAN TOMMY RICH SURVIVE A FEUD WITH KEN PATERA?

Ric Flair vs. Jimmy Snuka:
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BRUNO GOES BERSERK!
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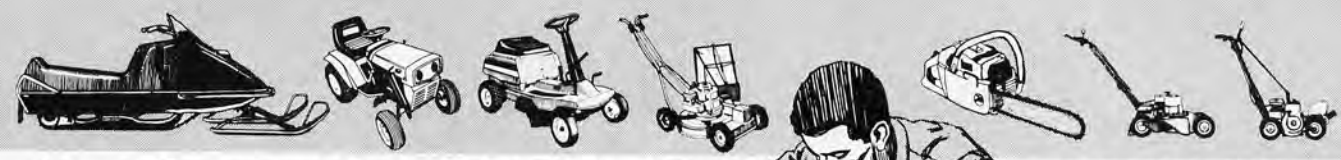

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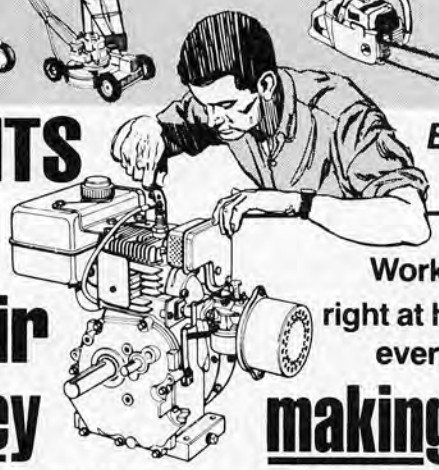

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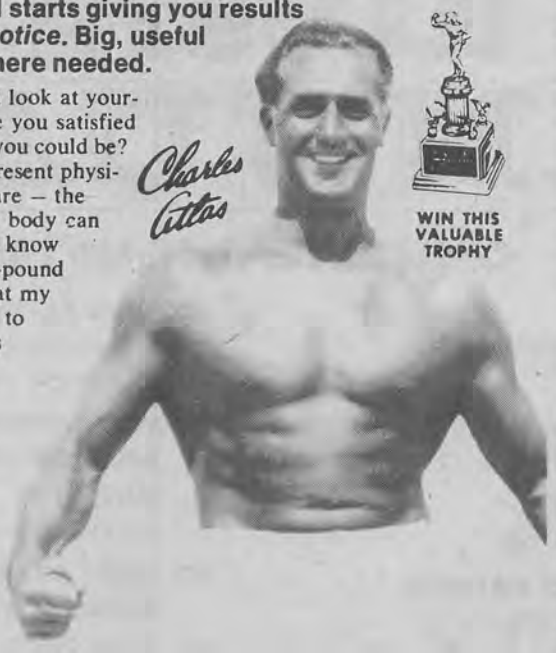

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WHAM! - NOW IT'S YOUR TURN TO DRY UP AND BLOW AWAY!
OH, MAC! YOU ARE A REAL MAN AFTER ALL!

PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED ANNUAL

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Andre vs. Brown by Duane Long

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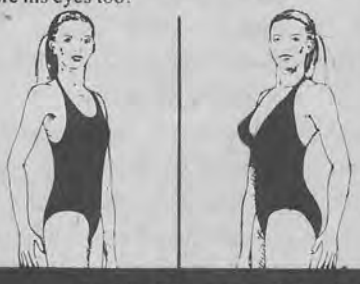

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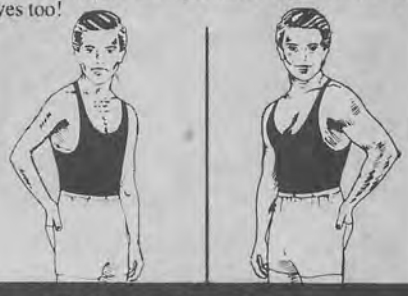

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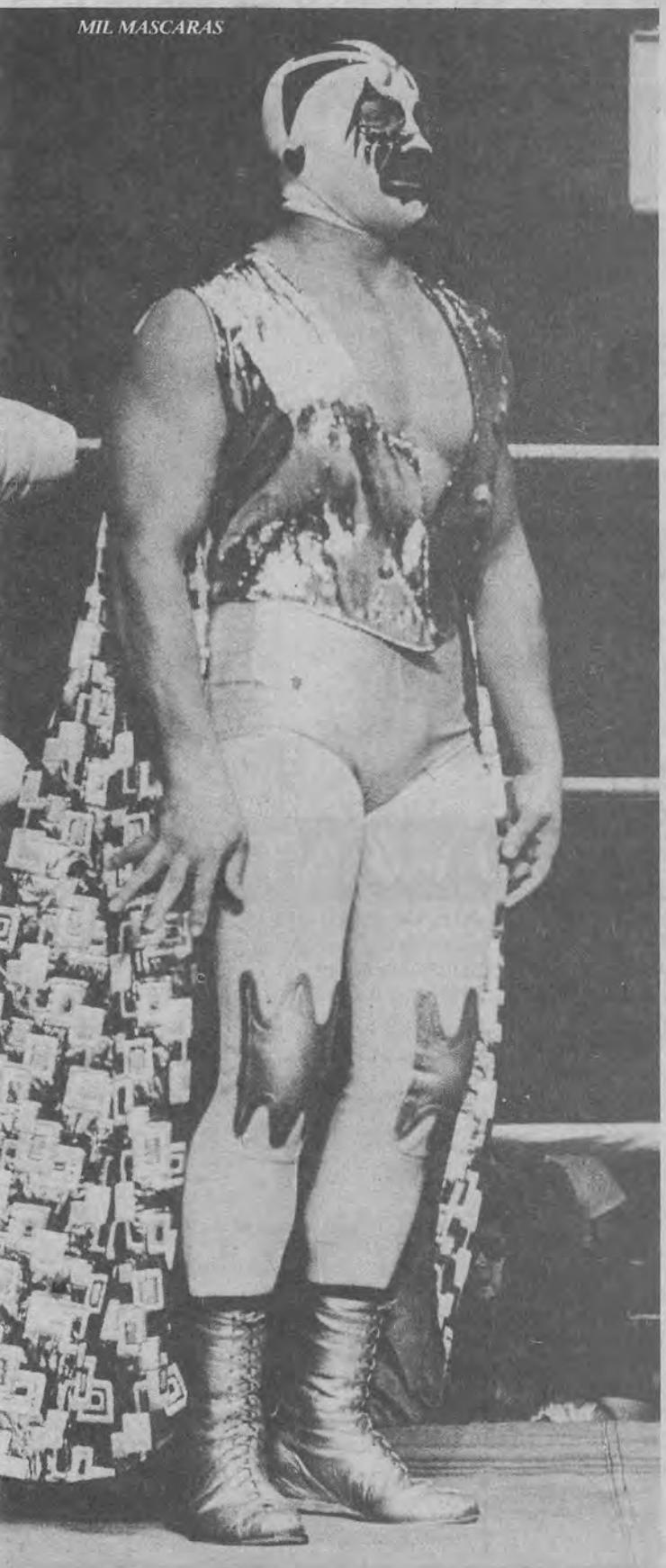
INTRODUCTION


MIL MASCARAS

WELCOME TO THE Winter 1983 ***Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual.*** This issue we have chosen to highlight the action of wrestling as represented by some of the sport's most exciting matches and feuds of the last few years.

The stories we have chosen to reprint in this issue are all superb examples of the double-edged sword of professional wrestling: The sport's best action can involve highly competitive matches among admirable individuals, or incredibly brutal feuds between men who who have yet to learn how to control their emotions.

Wrestling is a sport that, by its very nature, involves highly volatile personalities. One of the sport's most beloved champions, Bruno Sammartino, bowed to the dictates of his baser instincts several years ago. This is reported in the story from our August 1980 issue, **Bruno Goes Berserk: "I Tried To Kill Zbyszko!"**.

Even the legendary masked wrestler Mil Mascaras, who has made a career of upholding sportsmanship and fair play, can become involved in a dangerous rivalry. How this once happened was examined in our October 1981 issue: **Why Mil Mascaras Got Involved In Wrestling's Most Violent Feud.**

Another item from our October 1981 issue, a **Press Conference with Tommy "Wildfire" Rich**, offers a rare insight into the attitudes of a man who has just faced defeat. This interview took place shortly after Rich lost the NWA World title to Harley Race.

Sometimes a wrestler's anger may be directed against not another wrestler, but a manager. According to manager Fred Blassie, he was the unfair target of WWF champion Bob Backlund. In **Bob Backlund Put Me In The Hospital**, Blassie makes the startling claim that he was sneak-attacked by the WWF titleholder.

Though he recently captured a seventh NWA World title, Harley Race's quest for that goal lasted several years. Some of Race's most exciting matches took place against three brothers, a series of matches examined in **The Von Erichs: Harley Race's Roadblock To The NWA Title**, from our January 1982 issue.

When two of the most well-conditioned athletes in professional wrestling lock up for battle, the results can be devastating. Such was the case in September 1980 as one of the year's greatest feuds pitted the Nature Boy against the Superfly—**Ric Flair vs. Jimmy Snuka: The Insane Violence That No One Can Stop.**

(Continued on page 8)

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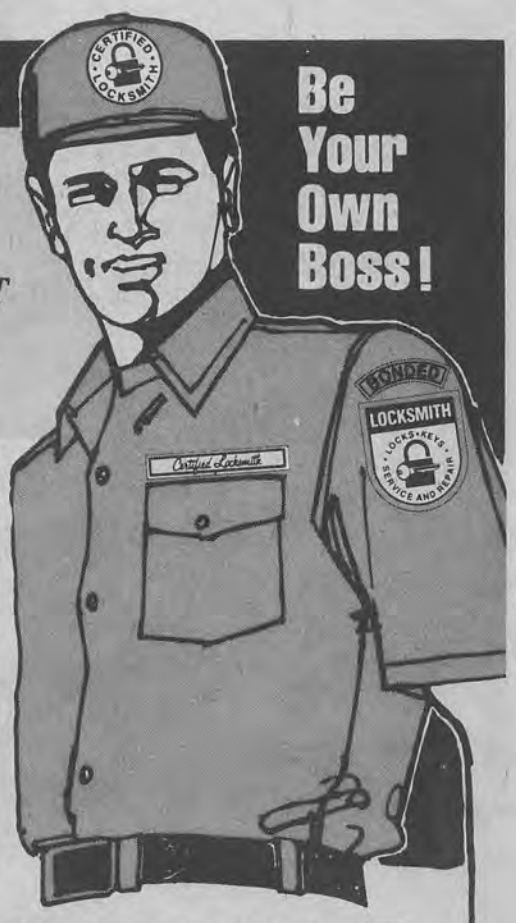

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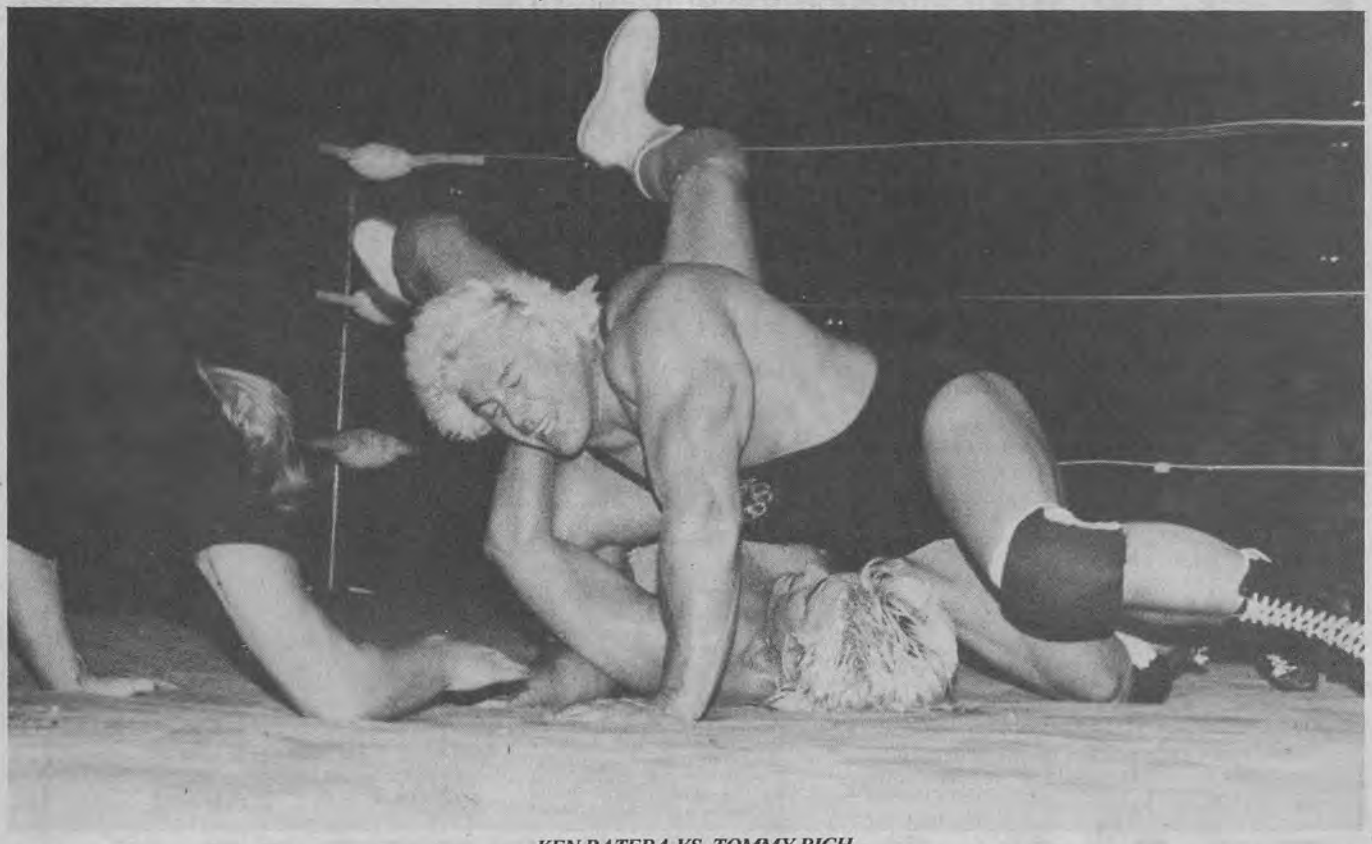
INTRODUCTION

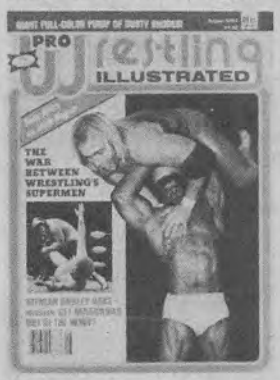
(Continued from page 6)



KEN PATERA VS. TOMMY RICH

Occasionally, the anticipation of a feud can create as much excitement as the actual feud itself. Postulating the meeting of two of wrestling's most accomplished superstars, *PWI*'s editors disagreed on the results of such a meeting in our December 1981 issue. The result was an article entitled, **The Experts Disagree: Can Tommy Rich Survive A Feud With Ken Patera?**

Some wrestlers rely on skill in the ring, others rely on sheer bulk. Two men who rely on pure muscle are Tony Atlas and Hulk Hogan. Our August 1981 issue examined **The War Between Wrestling's Supermen**, a feud that created excitement for wrestling fans from coast to coast.



Some individual wrestlers are really just a feud waiting to explode. Such is the case with two men profiled by *PWI*: **Masked Grappler: Gulf Coast Hurricane** (May 1981), and **Matt Brock: Looking At George Steele** (August 1981). Both the Masked Grappler and George Steele are men capable of creating all kinds of chaos on their own. But when they find someone they *really* don't like, you can expect utter chaos in the ring.

A contender to a major title may find himself caught between his love of the fans' cheers and his hunger for a championship belt. Such was the case with **Ric Flair's Painful Choice: His Fans Or Dusty's Title . . . He Can't Have Both** (January 1982).

But there's more to this issue of ***Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual*** than simply these stories. A fabulous four page color section highlights three peak-action photos of some of wrestling's most awe-inspiring matches. These full color pinups include **Jimmy Valiant vs. Kabuki**, **Andre the Giant vs. Bad Leroy Brown**, and **Kerry Von Erich vs. Ric Flair**. All of these photos are being presented to you for the first time anywhere.

In addition, there's a **Ringside: Update** column bringing you up to the minute on all the news in professional wrestling as of press time, and the latest, comprehensive **Official Wrestling Ratings** along with a special page devoted to **Ratings Analysis**.

All in all, this issue of ***Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual*** is a magazine that every wrestling fan will want to read and reread again and again. The editors hope that you enjoy this magazine as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you. □

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AMAZING TECHNIQUE HAS HELPED THOUSANDS!

Witchcraft secrets like these can make you rich faster than anything else in the world! Here's how others have used them to make miracles happen in their daily lives!

You'll see how Vern, a man who likes to give a lot of expensive parties, was always short of cash until he discovered the amazing WITCH'S MONEY JAR—now all he has to do is dip in, for it brings him an endless flow of cash! Evelyn, a waitress, was always lending money to friends, and was always broke. Finally, she placed her last dollar on the table, and worked the MONEY MAGNET SPELL over it. All at once, dozens of people who had borrowed money from her, rushed to pay her back!

Hank was perpetually broke. One night he got together with some friends, and they decided to cast the MONEY SPELL. The very next day, Hank received in the mail a check for some $250 worth of insurance. (He had never heard of the company that sent the check, he was not insured with them, and had never even made a claim—but he accepted the money.) Another member of the group that used the spell, a 40-year-old secretary, received an automobile as a gift! All the other members of the group received amazing windfalls of money, as well! You'll see how Dexter, a retiree, lives RENT FREE *and* receives $200 a week at the age of 78, with a secret you'll find in this Witch Book! You'll see how Claudine, a secretary, was able to wear the finest, most expensive furs—FREE—and spend weekends at an expensive ski lodge in the mountains, where she met a wonderful man! How Ruth L., a widow—with nothing but a small pension, and a little savings—received her dream house, by using a simple 5-minute ritual on page 38 of this book!

Using the same Witchcraft secrets, YOU can achieve peace of mind and freedom from money worries for the rest of your life!

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Feeling sick today? Plagued by a lot of troublesome illnesses? Perhaps some relative is sick and constantly demanding your attention? Or perhaps it is even a pet that needs help? With the MAGIC POWER OF WITCHCRAFT, you can cure anything, say authors Gavin and Yvonne Frost: "In our experience . . . we have not found a single incurable disease!"

• **ANDY DISSOLVES A GALLSTONE!**—Andy M. developed gallstones. When his illness became too troublesome to ignore, he went to a doctor. Urine tests revealed that he was chronically alkaline. His body was badly out of balance. Using this Witchcraft method to restore balance to the mind and body—in a short while, X-rays showed that he had no more gallstones! Andy never again suffered the excruciating pain of passing stones!

In the same way, say Gavin and Yvonne Frost, almost all illness can be prevented. You are actually employing an ancient Witchcraft method to remove diseased tissue! Even if you do not have any belief in the results, the power will work for you!

One woman, who had been in a wheelchair for 26 years, due to polio and arthritis, used the Witchcraft healing method, and reported that she had no pain and could walk and garden again! A man reported that his son's deep 3rd degree burns miraculously healed overnight!

• **SO SIMPLE A CHILD USES IT!**—A 4-year-old girl asked if she could try to heal a man who was limping—due to a torn ligament—with this simple Witchcraft healing method. In a matter of moments, she started her chant, laying her hands on the weak ankle. The man was miraculously cured! To skeptics, this should be convincing PROOF that anyone can use it!

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• **HOW TO SEE INTO THE FUTURE!**—Would you like to be able to see the future? You CAN with the magic Black Mirror you'll see how to make on page 23. All you need is some ink and a bowl of water. Then use the chant on this page, and you will be able to see many things. One man uses it to read tomorrow's newspaper. YOU can use it to check the stock market or that important horse race!

• **MAKE TIME RUN BACKWARD OR FORWARD!**—A Witch uses ancient methods to make time stand still or to run it backward or forward! To make your face look young or old at will, all you need is some morning dew, and the instructions on page 27. You can fly through time and space, on astral wings, go anywhere, do anything, with the simple method on page 126. You can visit a friend, look in on an acquaintance and see what he is doing—even appear in someone's dreams, and convince that person to do whatever you wish!

• **SECRETS OF SILENT PERSUASION!**—There is a magic handshake that Witches often use, revealed on page 62. With this secret, you can implant a thought in someone's mind! You can use this Witchcraft power to dominate others! Control your boss! Make someone love you! Leave your enemies groveling in the dust! There is even a gazing technique Witches use on page 45, for identical thoughts. With this secret, you can read your friend's mind and share his or her identical thoughts!

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- Using Witchcraft to Find Friends!
- How to Find the Lover You Want!
- How to Bring Your Perfect Mate to You!
- How to Dominate Others!
- Witchcraft Power for Money!
- Withcraft Power to Make You Irresistible to Others!
- Spells for Finding Lost Objects!
- How to Always Win with Luck Spells!
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For centuries, these Witchcraft secrets were hushed up, so that those in power could stay in power! Feudal lords kept their bondsmen as slaves. Factory owners kept their employees in dreaded sweatshops, because these masters knew they must not allow their workers to realize that they need not labor their lives away. Witchcraft was suppressed because it works! Not because of any "evil" in it. If it hadn't worked, no one would have worried about it. If you want to gain power, all you need is this amazing Witch Book!

By using these Witchcraft secrets, you too can change your life and gain health, wealth, someone to love—or anything else—surely, swiftly and automatically!

• **THE WITCH'S MONEY JAR!**—You'll discover the secret of the Witch's Money Jar, a mysterious jar that fills with money—whenever you want or need it! All you need is some water, pennies, and an ordinary jar or bowl! You'll be amazed at the speed with which it fills with money—a seemingly endless supply of needed cash!

• **THE WITCH'S MONEY MAGNET!**—You'll see how to magnetize a dollar bill so that it multiples! All you need to make your own Witch's Money Magnet is a dollar bill, a green candle, and the words on page 38. Once you do this, your dollar will double and keep doubling! You'll enjoy glittering luxuries, and start living like a millionaire, as Witches do!

• **THE WITCH'S BLACK MIRROR!**—Just as your TV set has been called your "window on the world," so the Black Mirror is your "window on the psychic world"—the world of the unknown. Making your own personal Black Mirror takes only a few moments and can open the way to unguessable visions. All you need is a bowl of water, some ink, and the chant on page 23. Suddenly you will see scenes from other places and times, or any scene you wish to see!

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MEET THE AUTHORS

GAVIN FROST, B.Sc., Ph.D., D.D., is Archbishop of the Church of Wicca, New Bern, North Carolina with national headquarters in Salem, Missouri, branches in several states and worldwide membership. He is Marshal of the Gold Star of England, with the right to wear the Saffron Robe and one of the very few Witches in the Western Hemisphere privileged to wear the authentic mark of initiation on his wrist. Although descended from a long line of mystics and scholars, and formerly a Vice-President and Director of International Operations for major aerospace companies, he prefers to be thought of as a humble teacher.

Mrs. YVONNE FROST, A.A., D.D., with her husband Gavin Frost, devotes her time to giving private instruction and publishing *Survival*, the newsletter of the Church of Wicca, of which she is a Bishop.

Articles by or about Gavin and Yvonne Frost have appeared in such national publications as *Midnight* and the *National Enquirer*.

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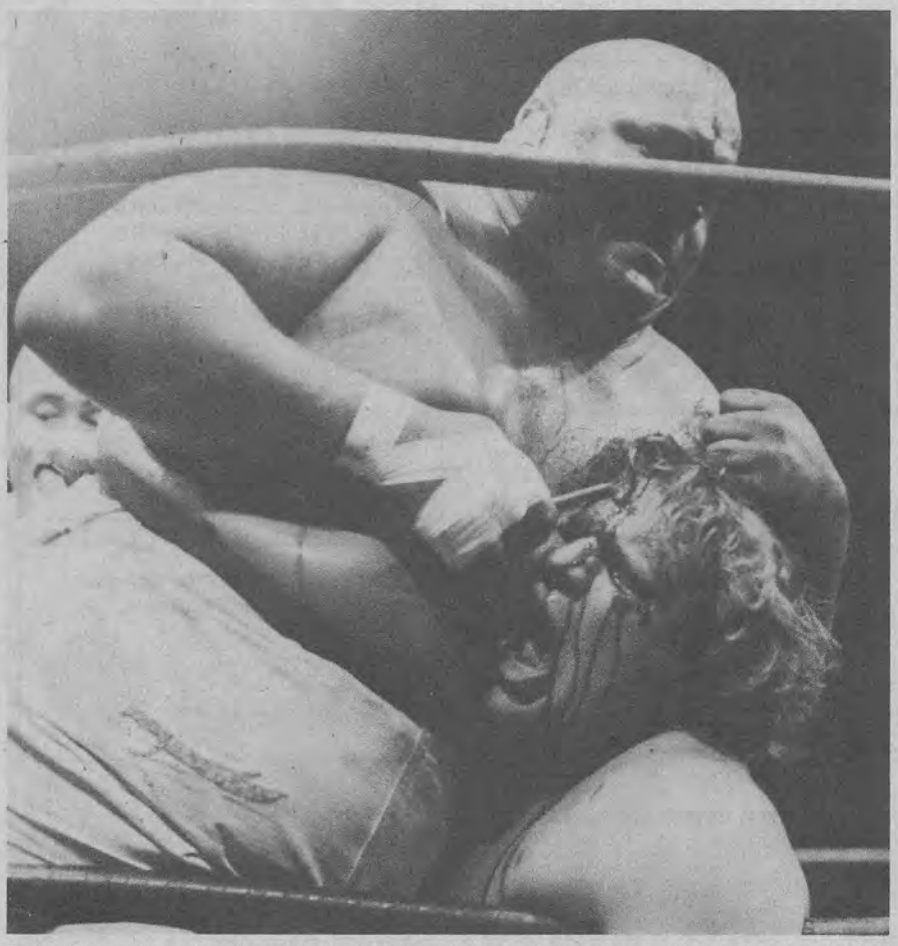


Buddy Rogers fears that Abdullah the Butcher will do to Jimmy Snuka what he is doing to Dick Slater. "The Superfly," however, isn't concerned about Abdullah's tactics. He's willing to risk his career for the opportunity to wrestle the Sudanese madman.

UPDATE: MONTREAL, QUEBEC

Jimmy Snuka is getting himself involved in a feud that even his manager, Buddy Rogers, fears can do nothing but harm his career. "The Superfly" is waging war with a man many consider to be the most dangerous in wrestling, Abdullah the Butcher.

"I know Jimmy can handle himself against any normal man," Rogers said, "but the fact is this maniac Abdullah is not a normal man. He is a killer. He obviously has no regard for his appearance, so he will take chances with his own body that will allow him to damage his opponent's. If Abdullah can get Jimmy in a defensive posture early in the match, Jimmy might never be able to recover. I've seen some talented wrestlers have their careers ended by that madman."

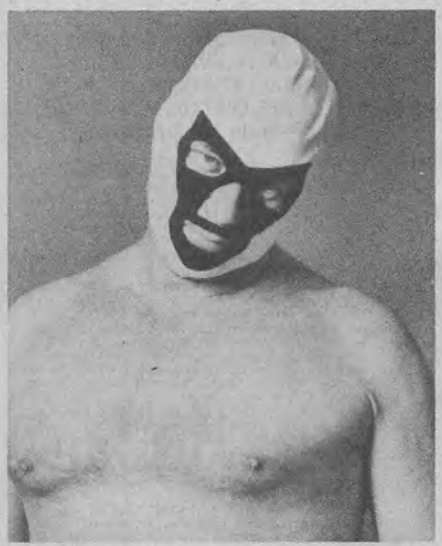
Snuka admits that his emotions are endangering his career. But he is very determined to face Abdullah, one on one. "Brudda," he said, "I know he's a killer. I know that my career is in the hands of a crazyman. But the way I'm feeling, I can get just as crazy as he can. No one, including Buddy Rogers, has ever seen this side of me."

UPDATE: ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Mr. Wrestling II has been coaching Pistol Pez Whatley in preparation for Pez's title match with National champion Larry Zbyszko. This seems rather strange, since Wrestling II himself is seeking the National title.

"That's just the kind of man Mr. Wrestling II is," Whatley said. "He cares more about the welfare of his friends than he does about

(Continued on page 57)



Mr. Wrestling II has graciously given of his time to help Pistol Pez Whatley train for his upcoming match with National champion Larry Zbyszko.

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RATINGS ANALYSIS

This column will tell fans how we go about rating more than 150 wrestlers in 14 different categories. It is a behind-the-scenes look at the most important—and respected—ratings system in the sport. This column is vital reading for all wrestling fans

Some controversial rankings. We draw your attention to two important new rankings:

Butch Reed

BUTCH REED: Now ranked number one in the "Most Hated" column, Reed has brought more hatred upon himself in a shorter time than any other wrestler in recent history. The fact that he has joined the Rat Pack, allied himself with Ted DiBiase (himself rated fifth Most Hated wrestler), and virtually spit in the face of former friend Junkyard Dog are but a few of the reasons for this number one rating.

LARRY ZBYSZKO: Now ranked number five in the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual* top 10, Zbyszko is (as of press time) the National champion of record. Many people feel that Zbyszko stole the National title from Mr. Wrestling II, but the skills Zbyszko displayed in a recent one-hour draw against Wrestling II were admirable. His spot in the top 10 is well-deserved.

They must be very busy men! A close scrutiny of the ratings on pages 14 and 15 will show that a few wrestlers are ranked in more than one category.

The reason for this is quite simple: These are men who split their time between two major areas and have achieved success great enough in each area to warrant their being included in both sets of ratings.

Mr. Wrestling II, for example, is ranked second in the Georgia area and fourth in the Mid-South. His success in Georgia has provided him with a higher ranking than in the Mid-South, but the combined rankings, plus the fact that he has achieved such notable success in two regions, have placed him in the number seven spot for the entire NWA.

Another wrestler who has been successful in two areas (but not great enough to be considered in the NWA listing) is Kamala. Note that he's ranked sixth in the World Class area and number nine in the Mid-South.

So what about these guys? Other wrestlers appear in various areas of the country but do so only on a sporadic basis. Dusty Rhodes recently traveled to New York to wrestle in Madison Square Garden, but a one-night appearance in the Big Apple is certainly not reason enough to begin rating Dusty in the WWF.

A similar situation is beginning to develop in the Georgia area. Certain wrestlers, including Bob Sweetan, Bobby Jaggers, Scott Casey, and Tully Blanchard, have begun to branch out and wrestle in the Georgia area.

Currently, these men wrestle primarily in the Southwest. Should they begin to spend more time wrestling in the Georgia area and make appearances on *World Championship Wrestling*, we will consider including them in the Georgia ratings. As a result, some of these men may find themselves ranked in several areas of the country simultaneously.

A man like Mil Mascaras, as talented as he is, seldom appears in our ratings because he is constantly moving from one area of the country—and the world—to another. This month, based on his superb performance in recent weeks, Mascaras makes a rare entrance into the ratings: seventh in the World Class area.

The address for mail: We welcome comments and questions regarding our ratings. Send all correspondence to: *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual*; Box 48; Rockville Centre; New York 11571. □

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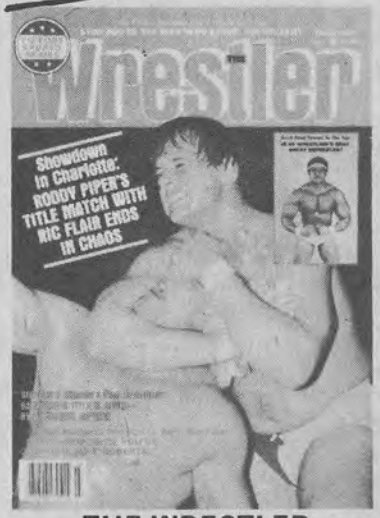

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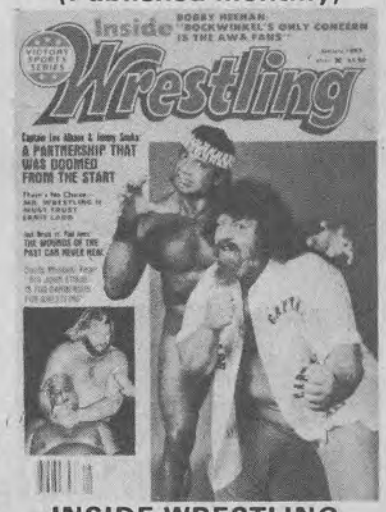

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PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED

T.V. SPORTS

Ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. These ratings are compiled by the editors and are universally recognized as official.

David Von Erich

Bob Backlund

TOP10

1—HARLEY RACE
253, Kansas City, MO

2—ANDRE THE GIANT
497, Grenoble, France

3—DUSTY RHODES
302, Austin, TX

4—NICK BOCKWINKEL
245, Beverly Hills, CA

5—LARRY ZBYSZKO
240, Pittsburgh, PA

6—RICK MARTEL
236, Quebec City, Quebec

7—ADRIAN ADONIS
251, New York, NY

8—DAVID VON ERICH
247, Denton, TX

9—BOB BACKLUND
242, Princeton, MN

10—DORY FUNK JR.
244, Amarillo, TX

TAG TEAMS

1—JACK & JERRY BRISCO
Combined Weight: 455 pounds

2—KEN PATERA & CRUSHER BLACKWELL
Combined Weight: 730 pounds

3—BOBBY DUNCUM & KING KONG MOSCA
Combined Weight: 574 pounds

4—THE ROAD WARRIORS
Combined Weight: 540 pounds

5—THE SHEEPHERDERS
Combined Weight: 455 pounds

6—TED DiBIASE & MR. OLYMPIA
Combined Weight: 487 pounds

7—KELLY KINISKI & ONE MAN GANG
Combined Weight: 662 pounds

8—THE SAMOANS
Combined Weight: 598 pounds

9—THE VON ERICHS
*Combined Weight: 752 pounds**

10—RIP OLIVER & THE ASSASSIN
Combined Weight: 485 pounds

*Combined weights reflect three team members

NWA and AWA ratings are compiled with the assistance of wrestlers, promoters, and reporters. "Most Popular" and "Most Hated" ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestling fans and on mail that comes to our offices.

NWA

World Champion:
HARLEY RACE
253, Kansas City, MO

1—RIC FLAIR
243, Minneapolis, MN

2—GREG VALENTINE
243, Seattle, WA

3—LARRY ZBYSZKO
240, Pittsburgh, PA

4—DORY FUNK JR.
244, Amarillo, TX

5—RON BASS
285, Pampa, TX

6—SCOTT McGHEE
220, Shipley, England

7—MR. WRESTLING II
232, Atlanta, GA

8—DEWEY ROBERTSON
247, Hamilton, Ontario

9—BOB ARMSTRONG
229, Marietta, GA

10—KERRY VON ERICH
251, Denton, TX

AWA

World Champion:
NICK BOCKWINKEL
245, Beverly Hills, CA

1—RICK MARTEL
236, Quebec City, Quebec

2—WAHOO McDANIEL
260, Midland, TX

3—JERRY LAWLER
235, Memphis, TN

4—KEN PATERA
256, Portland, OR

5—MAD DOG VACHON
225, Algeria

6—MR. SAITO
247, Japan

7—BARON VON RASCHKE
271, Germany

8—CRUSHER BLACKWELL
474, Stone Mountain, GA

9—JESSE VENTURA
270, Muscle Beach, CA

10—GREG GAGNE
220, Robinsdale, MN

MOST POPULAR

1—DUSTY RHODES
302, Austin, TX

2—ANDRE THE GIANT
497, Grenoble, France

3—RODDY PIPER
231, Scotland

4—RICK MARTEL
236, Quebec City, Quebec

5—JUNKYARD DOG
260, New Orleans, LA

6—JIMMY SNUKA
250, Fiji Islands

7—TOMMY RICH
238, Hendersonville, TN

8—RICK STEAMBOAT
243, Honolulu, HI

9—KEVIN VON ERICH
254, Denton, TX

10—JIMMY VALIANT
251, New York, NY

MOST HATED

1—HACKSAW REED
249, Kansas City, MO

2—LARRY ZBYSZKO
240, Pittsburgh, PA

3—KEVIN SULLIVAN
235, Boston, MA

4—RON BASS
285, Pampa, FL

5—TED DiBIASE
247, Omaha, NE

6—TULLY BLANCHARD
235, San Antonio, TX

7—GREG VALENTINE
243, Seattle, WA

8—BUZZ SAWYER
240, St. Petersburg, FL

9—MAGNIFICENT MURACO
262, Sunset Beach, HI

10—MICHAEL HAYES
255, Marietta, GA

OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS

Below are the ratings for the top regional wrestling areas of the country. These ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestlers, promoters, and reporters.

WWF

Champion:
BOB BACKLUND
242, Princeton, MN

1—**SGT. SLAUGHTER**
310, Paris Island, SC
2—**MAGNIFICENT MURACO**
262, Sunset Beach, HI
3—**JIMMY SNUKA**
250, Fiji Islands
4—**IVAN KOLOFF**
249, Russia
5—**JOHN STUDD**
364, Washington, DC
6—**ROCKY JOHNSON**
244, Washington, DC
7—**GEORGE STEELE**
298, Detroit, MI
8—**IVAN PUTSKI**
242, Krakow, Poland
9—**TITO SANTANA**
245, Mission, TX
10—**TIGER CHUNG LEE**
270, Korea

GEORGIA

1—**LARRY ZBYSZKO**
240, Pittsburgh, PA
2—**MR. WRESTLING II**
232, Atlanta, GA
3—**TOMMY RICH**
238, Hendersonville, TN
4—**BUZZ SAWYER**
240, St. Petersburg, FL
5—**RONNIE GARVIN**
231, Montreal, Quebec
6—**THE IRON SHEIK**
262, Teheran, Iran
7—**OLE ANDERSON**
256, Minneapolis, MN
8—**KILLER BROOKS**
235, Lancaster, TX
9—**BRETT WAYNE**
242, St. Petersburg, FL
10—**PEZ WHATLEY**
238, El Paso, TX

WORLD CLASS

1—**KEVIN VON ERICH**
254, Denton, TX
2—**DAVID VON ERICH**
247, Denton, TX
3—**KERRY VON ERICH**
251, Denton, TX
4—**JIM GARVIN**
235, Tampa, FL
5—**MICHAEL HAYES**
255, Marietta, GA
6—**KAMALA**
360, Uganda
7—**MIL MASCARAS**
242, Mexico City, Mexico
8—**ICEMAN PARSONS**
242, St. Louis, MO
9—**BUDDY ROBERTS**
247, Del City, OK
10—**TERRY GORDY**
289, Chatanooga, TN

MID-ATLANTIC

1—**GREG VALENTINE**
243, Seattle, WA
2—**DORY FUNK JR.**
244, Amarillo, TX
3—**RODDY PIPER**
231, Scotland
4—**DICK SLATER**
235, Tampa, FL
5—**JIMMY VALIANT**
251, New York, NY
6—**THE GREAT KABUKI**
252, Singapore
7—**JOS LeDUC**
280, Godbout, Quebec
8—**JACK BRISCO**
232, Blackwell, OK
9—**ONE MAN GANG**
402, Chicago, IL
10—**BUGSY McGRAW**
245, New York, NY

FLORIDA

1—**RON BASS**
285, Pampa, TX
2—**SCOTT McGHEE**
220, Shipley, England
3—**DUSTY RHODES**
302, Austin, TX
4—**EXOTIC ADRIAN STREET**
220, South Wales
5—**KEVIN SULLIVAN**
235, Boston, MA
6—**BARRY WINDHAM**
230, Sweetwater, TX
7—**THE PURPLE HAZE**
235, Buffalo, NY
8—**KING KONG MOSCA**
309, Caledou, Ontario
9—**MIKE GRAHAM**
232, Tampa, FL
10—**BRAD ARMSTRONG**
229, Marietta, GA

MID-SOUTH

1—**JUNKYARD DOG**
260, New Orleans, LA
2—**HACKSAW REED**
249, Kansas City, MO
3—**HACKSAW DUGGAN**
280, New York, NY
4—**MR. WRESTLING II**
232, Atlanta, GA
5—**MR. OLYMPIA**
240, parts unknown
6—**KING KONG BUNDY**
420, Atlantic City, NJ
7—**TED DiBIASE**
247, Omaha, NE
8—**SUPER DESTROYER**
271, parts unknown
9—**KAMALA**
360, Uganda
10—**MASKED SUPERSTAR**
282, parts unknown

SOUTHWEST

1—**ADRIAN ADONIS**
251, New York, NY
2—**TULLY BLANCHARD**
235, San Antonio, TX
3—**BOB SWEETAN**
285, Round Rock, TX
4—**SCOTT CASEY**
235, Amarillo, TX
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9—**SWEET BROWN SUGAR**
226, Dallas, TX
10—**AL PEREZ**
234, Tampa, FL

NORTHWEST

1—**CURT HENNIG**
235, Minneapolis, MN
2—**PLAYBOY BUDDY ROSE**
245, Minneapolis, MN
3—**BILLY JACK**
245, Portland, OR
4—**RIP OLIVER**
245, Tampa, FL
5—**RON RITCHIE**
238, New York, NY
6—**AL MADRIL**
235, Los Angeles, CA
7—**CHIEF TAPU**
228, Samoa
8—**BRIAN ADIDAS**
238, Dallas, TX
9—**STAN STASIAK**
265, Portland, OR
10—**THE ASSASSIN**
240, parts unknown

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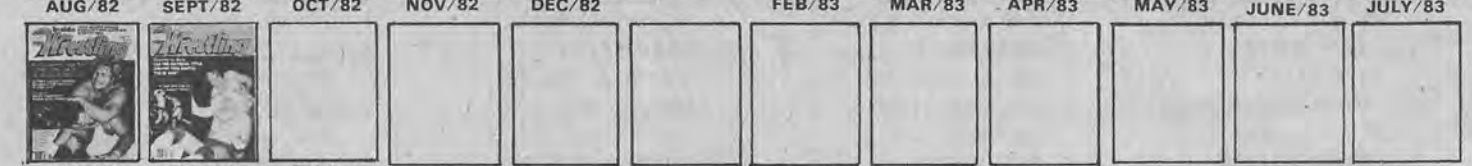

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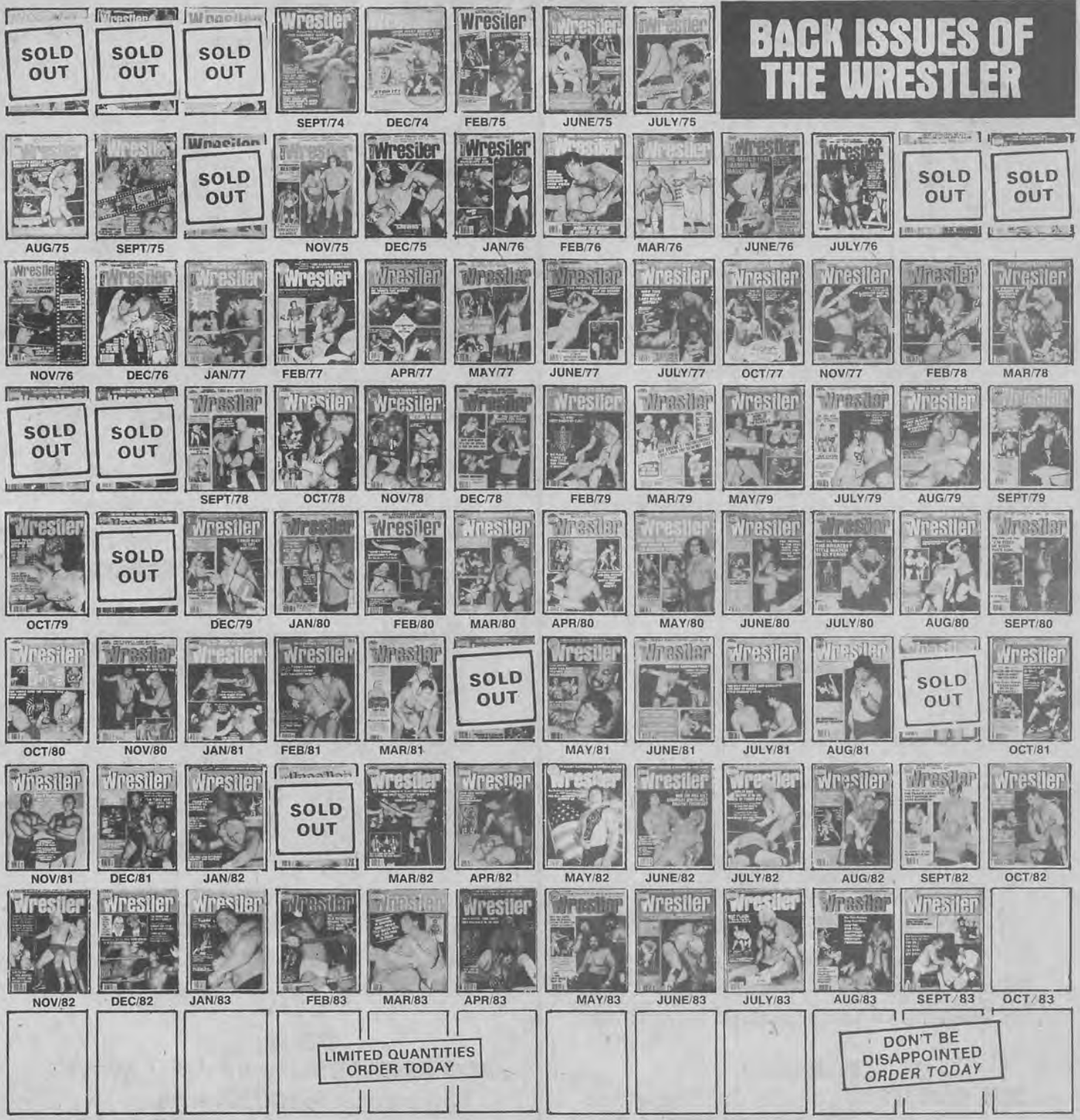

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☐ JULY/76	☐ DEC/78	☐ AUG/80	☐ APR/82	☐ AUG/83
☐ NOV/76	☐ FEB/79	☐ SEPT/80	☐ MAY/82	☐ SEPT/83
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THIS MONTH IN...

The Wrestler

You are at ringside as **HARLEY RACE** makes history by defeating **RIC FLAIR** to capture his unprecedented *seventh* NWA World Heavyweight title

If men like **JACK & JERRY BRISCO** can fall to the ways of the rulebreakers, can there be any hope for the rest of professional wrestling?

PLUS . . .

MR. OLYMPIA speaks out about the fans and **MR. WRESTLING II** . . . **J.J. DILLON** delivers an ultimatum to **ANGELO MOSCA** . . . An examination of the bloody feud between **BUZZ SAWYER** and **DICK MURDOCH** . . . Global Wrestling promoter **ANN GUNKEL** is profiled

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Find out about how the National heavyweight title prompted the bitter feud between **LARRY ZBYSZKO** and **MR. WRESTLING II**

You are there as **KEVIN SULLIVAN** and **THE PURPLE HAZE** convene at midnight for a satanic black mass under a full moon

PLUS . . .

BOB BACKLUND defends his WWF title against **SAMOAN AFA** . . . A Hotseat interview with **JUNKYARD DOG** . . . **JACK BRISCO** and **EDDIE GRAHAM** face off "One on One" . . . AWA champ **NICK BOCKWINKEL** and **DUSTY RHODES** clash in a match that cost Dusty the *NWA* title!

All this and much more . . . in the October 1983 issue of *Inside Wrestling*

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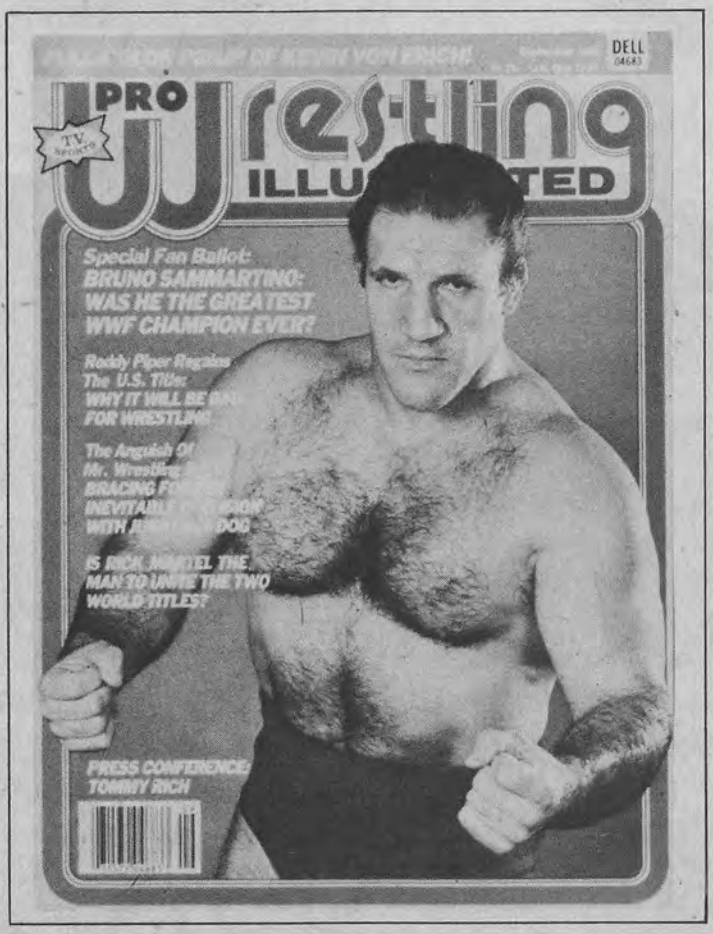

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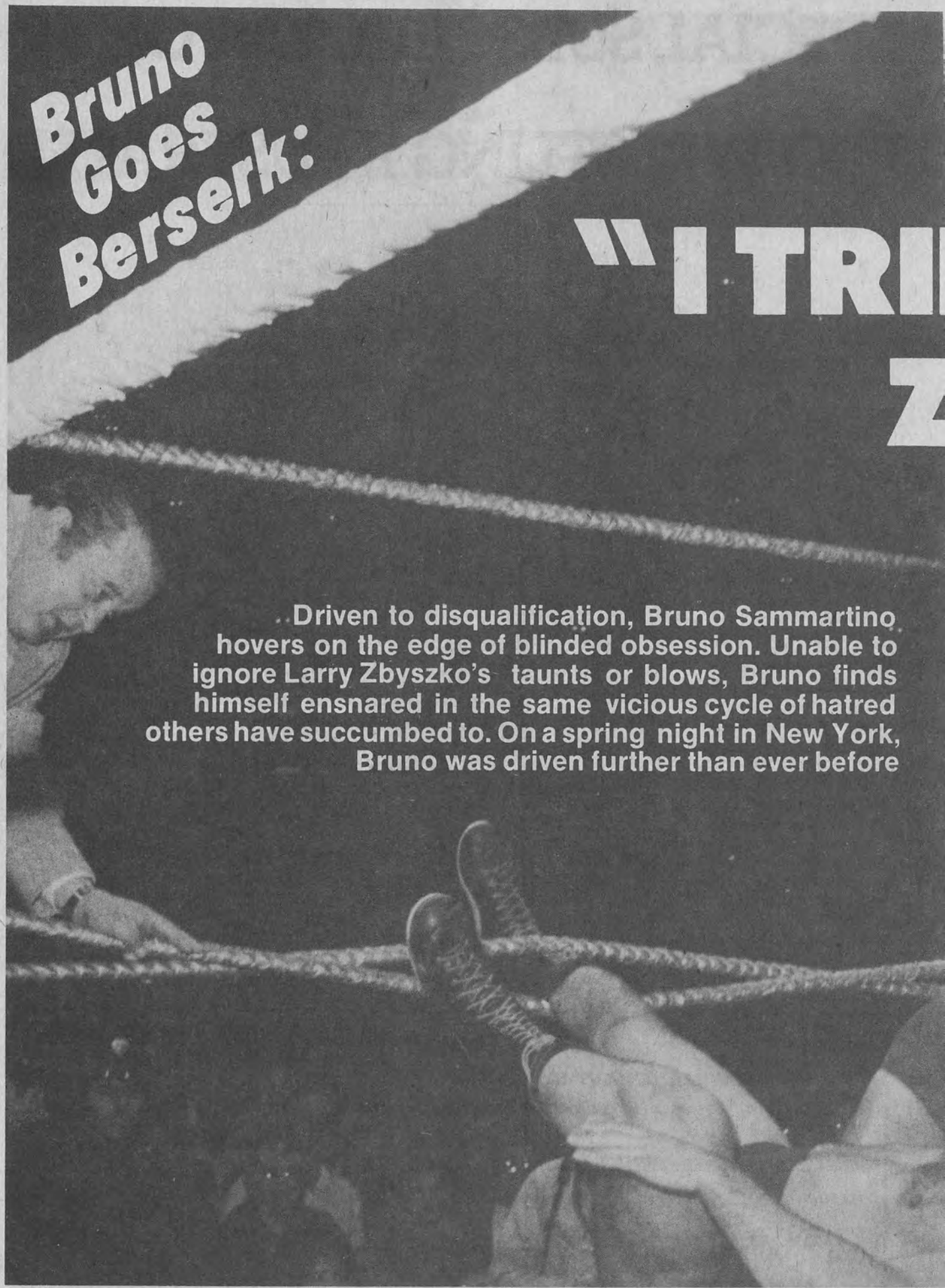
Bruno Goes Berserk:

"I TRI
Z



..Driven to disqualification, Bruno Sammartino hovers on the edge of blinded obsession. Unable to ignore Larry Zbyszko's taunts or blows, Bruno finds himself ensnared in the same vicious cycle of hatred others have succumbed to. On a spring night in New York, Bruno was driven further than ever before

PHOTOS BY STU SAKS

ED TO KILL BYSZKO!"

SHOCK TRANSFORMS INTO pained betrayal. In turn, that changes into angry resentment, only to smolder and devolve into murderous rage. Thus, Bruno Sammartino's mindless attack upon Larry Zbyszko was inevitable. All that remained was when and where.

Madison Square Garden. March 24, 1980. The largest crowd ever to witness a sporting event at the Garden gathered with anxious anticipation for the co-main event. Bruno vs. Larry. Friend vs. friend. Now, enemy vs. enemy.

"I tried to kill Zbyszko!" shouted Sammartino, still trembling from the match. "Doggone, I wanted to pull his head off and throw it onto Seventh Avenue."

This nightmarish day began in our editorial offices when Bruno came up for an interview. Hours before the match, Sammartino could barely control the growing anger. When he saw a large photo of Zbyszko lying upon one of our editor's desks, Sammartino seized and shredded the picture, dumping the tattered remains into a garbage can.

"You know, if I had a lighter, I would have burnt the damn thing," said Bruno in a display of uncharacteristic rage.

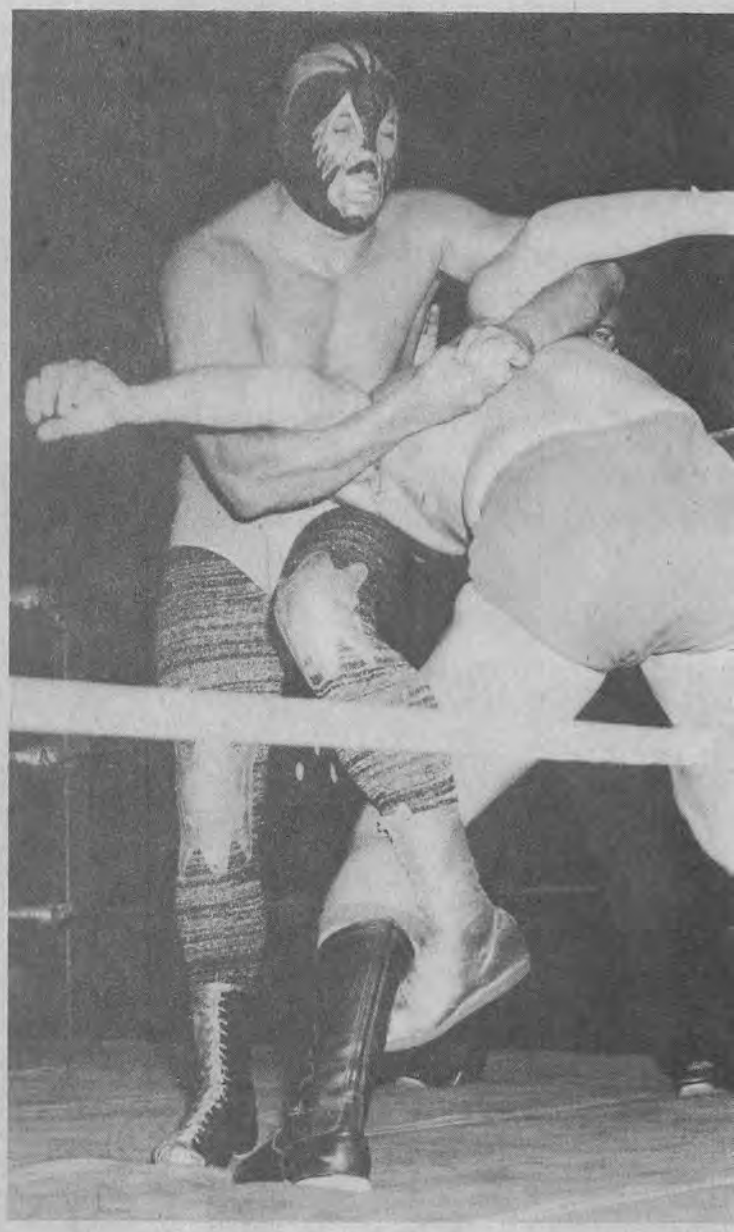
That scene presaged a night of hate unsurpassed in Garden annals. No kindly maneuvers for these two. No attempt at decency or wrestling within the bounds of wrestling rules.

Sadly, this confrontation between old friends was nothing more than a blistering brawl. Take no prisoners. Leave a body behind.

"I gotta watch myself wrestling Bruno," said Zbyszko with a sinister grin. "At his age, one false move and he's crippled for life. I want him out of the way,

(Continued on page 54)

WHY MIL MASCARAS GOT INVOLVED IN WRESTLING'S MOST VIOLENT FEUD



Only a man of Mil Mascaras' high integrity would involve himself in as bitter a feud as that which engulfs The Funks pitted against The Briscos. But Mascaras does what he believes is best, even if it means putting his own life on the line

PHOTOS BY GREG NAPOLI

HOW DID MIL MASCARAS get involved in wrestling's most violent feud?

"Who? That chubby guy? That was Mil Mascaras?" asked Terry Funk. "Come off it, you ain't gonna tell me that the dude wrestlin' with creep-face Jerry Brisco was really Mascaras. Man, you press people sure are stupid, ain't ya?

"Anyone with half a brain, which kinda rules out you reporters, knows that the dude under the mask down in Puerto Rico was really Jack Brisco. But leave it to a Brisco to find some way to hide. I mean, you wanna talk about cowards, you gotta start with the Brisco sisters 'cause man, they can't ever fight clean, they can't ever fight like men, they've spent their whole lives runnin' and hidin' and cowerin' and whenever you try and get them into a corner, they try and find some way to crawl away from under the rock," said Terry.

The Funks, Terry and Dory Jr., signed to wrestle Jack and Jerry Brisco in Puerto Rico. However, Jack was delayed in Japan and couldn't make the match. Enter Mil Mascaras.

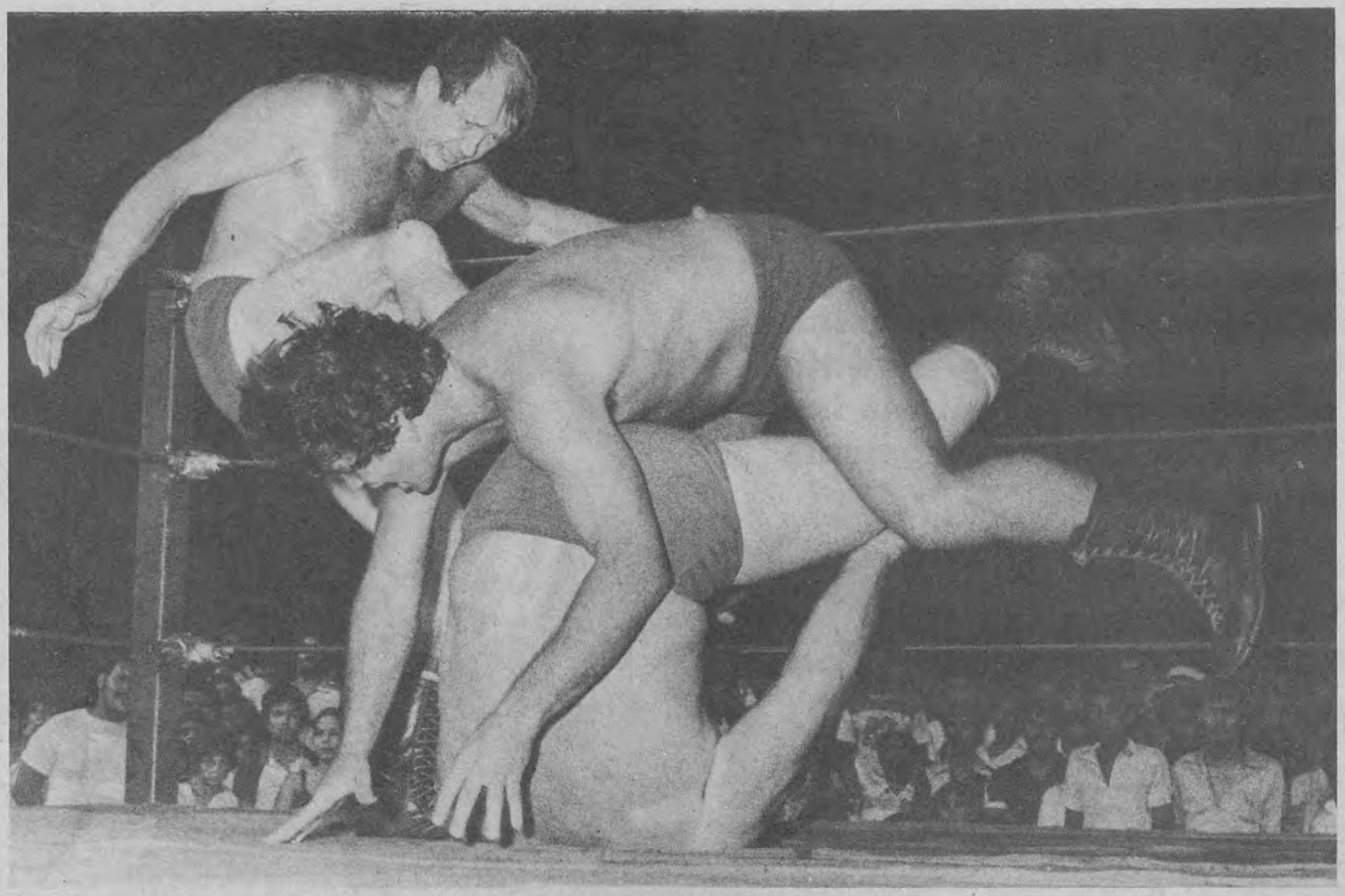
"You know how it is, I try and avoid getting involved in someone else's feud," said Mil. "It is not right. Usually I avoid taking any sides at all. That is not my way."

Mascaras paused and fiddled with the bottom of his multi-colored mask.

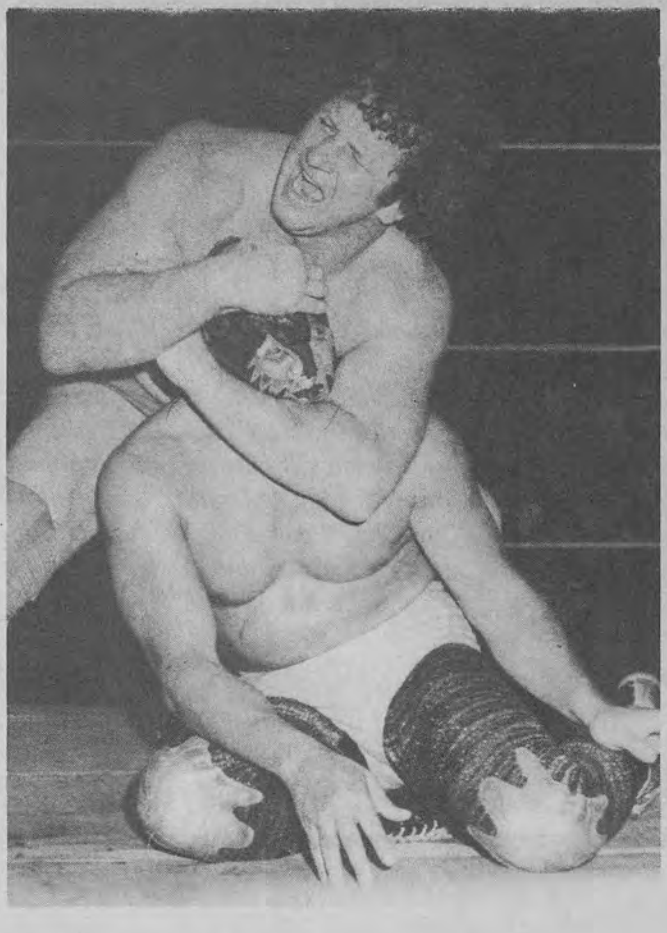
"But this was different, if you know what I mean," said Mil. "For too long now, I have simmered beneath the loud-mouthed taunts of the Funks. I do not particularly care for men who feel they must scream and do their wrestling into a microphone or tape recorder. I have certain beliefs about how wrestling should be conducted and the professional behavior of wrestlers both in and out of the squared circle.

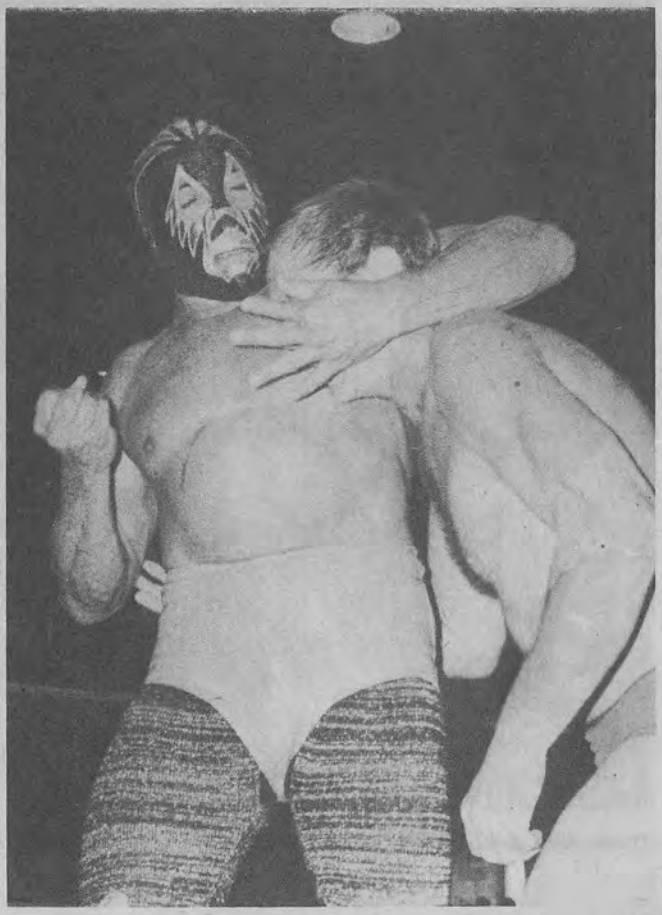
"So I do find the Funks horrid creatures. I have had words with them before. But more so, I deeply respect the Briscos. I consider them true gentlemen and believe

(Continued on page 62)



Terry Funk receives help from his brother just in time (above). Terry does not believe the man he holds in a headlock (below left) is Mil Mascaras. Mil holds Dory's head in place for a chopping right hand (below right).

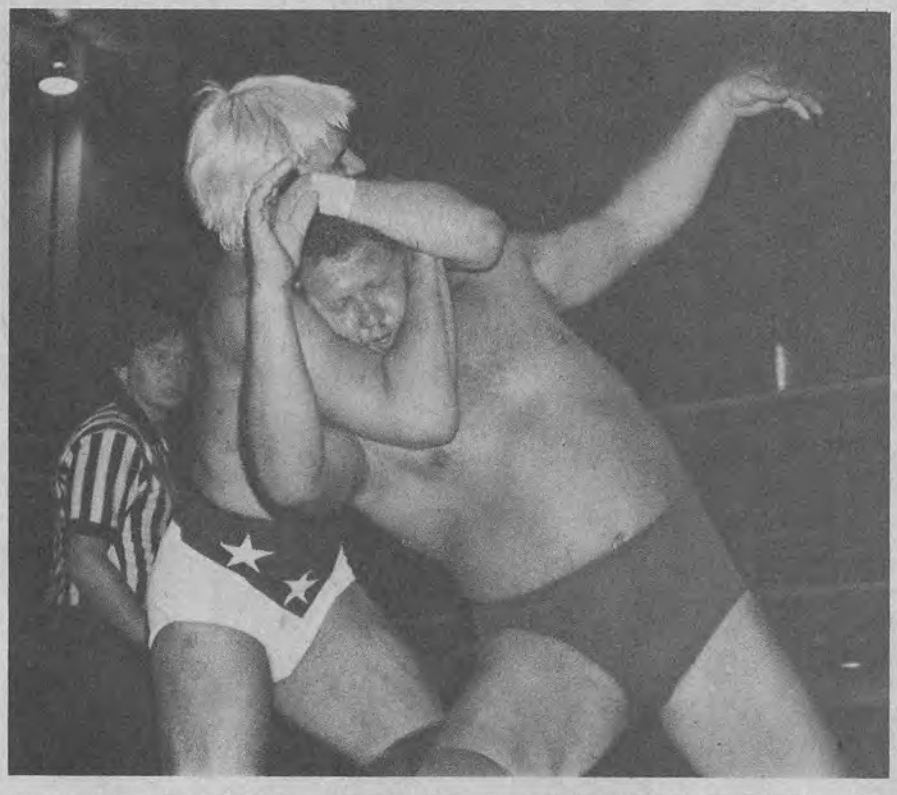




Every issue, three reporters from PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED will participate in an incisive press conference with a top wrestling star. The questions will be demanding. And the answers will reveal the innermost thoughts of the giants of the sport

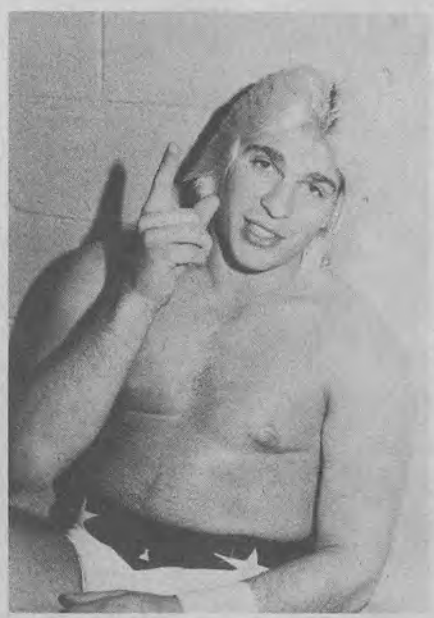
PRESS CONFERENCE

TOMMY RICH



(He held the NWA title for less than a week, but his triumph and reign rewarded hundreds of thousands of fans who never stopped believing. And for that reason alone, Tommy Rich stands as a shining example of courage and determination in a world often lacking in such critical ingredients. Discussing his career and attitudes on "Press Conference" are Editor-in-Chief Peter King, Managing Editor Bill Apter, and Associate Editor Steve Farhood.)

"[Harley Race] knows the truth and the truth is that Tommy Rich beat him fair and square and won the NWA title. And nothing Harley Race or anyone else says will ever change that."



PETER KING: Tommy, thanks for coming by and talking to us.

TOMMY RICH: My pleasure.

KING: There's no hard feelings between you and the media considering all the criticism you received after your conversion to rule-breaking, is there?

RICH: Certainly not, Peter, really. You know, I deserved what I got. You guys have a job to do, you do it real well, and if anybody wants to be in the spotlight, they damn well better learn how to deal with criticism.

STEVE FARHOOD: Do you find the spotlight difficult and demanding?

RICH: Oh, once you're a public figure, you come to accept some kinda interference on your personal freedom. I mean, I just can't walk into any restaurant and eat without people asking for autographs. I love my fans.

BILL APTER: A while ago, you said you'd do anything for your fans. Do you still hold to that pledge?

RICH: Absolutely. I'm finished breaking promises. My word is good now. That's why I was so thrilled to win the NWA title for my fans.

KING: What was the first thought that went through your mind when you won the title?

RICH: I couldn't believe it. Yeah, that's right, it was so amazing to me, I, I was like a little kid again, the feeling of giddiness when you go under the Christmas tree and find a present you never thought you'd ever get right there with your name on it. Yeah, it was simply the most amazing feeling in the world.

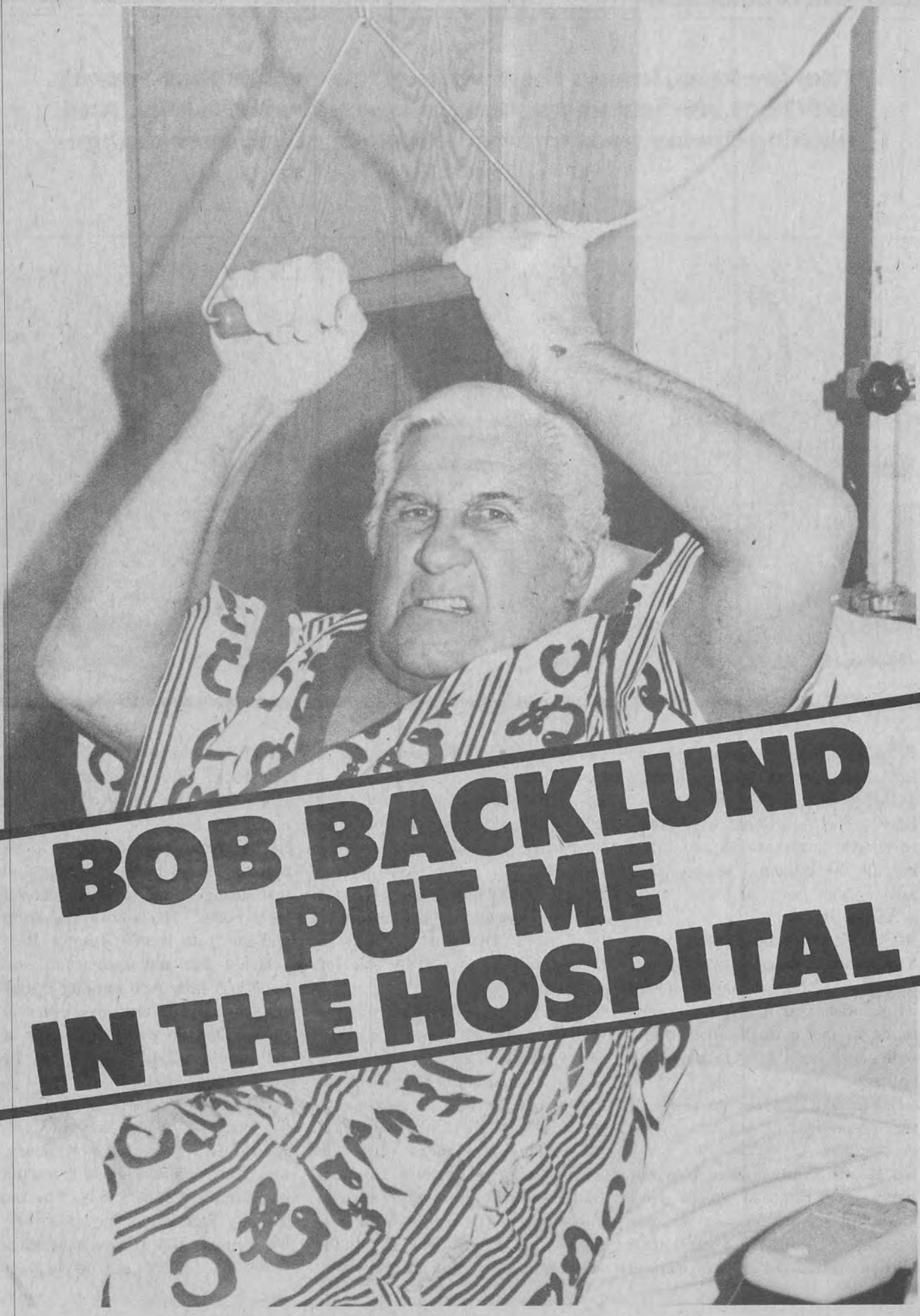
APTER: Now once Race got the belt back, he went around saying you were lucky. How do you feel about that?

RICH: Well, Race is entitled to his opinion, even if he's wrong and just saying things to make himself look better. He knows the truth and the truth is that Tommy Rich beat him fair and square and won the NWA title. And nothing Harley Race or anyone else says will ever change that, no way. He can run at the mouth all he wants, but he can't change that.

FARHOOD: What did you feel like once you'd lost the belt?

RICH: Real low, but fortunately, only for a while. I guess I'm a lot more mature than I was. The old Tommy Rich would have felt sorry for himself. But I have a healthier

(Continued on page 64)



BOB BACKLUND PUT ME IN THE HOSPITAL

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

By Fred Blassie

I AM LYING here in the hospital. Yes, don't cry, my fans, Fred Blassie, Classy Fred Blassie, unparalleled genius of the wrestling world, survived this sadistic, cheap attack only because of my strength and courage.

But I want all the world to know who put me here. I want the entire wrestling world, all you pencil-necked geeks and four-eyed fans and dumb-looking referees and lying, ugly wrestlers to know the real truth, the real story, the ultimate truth.

Arnold Skoaland and Bob Backlund attacked me, caught me from behind, threw me to the ground and pummeled me, putting me in this here hospital bed. Yes, they did, fat-boy Skoaland and his stupid stooge Backlund snuck up outside the arena, jumped me from behind and put me in this hospital bed.

My fingers are starting to hurt from the fury of my wrath on this here typewriter. I have to slow down, control my anger and simply, in a calm, reasonable manner tell the world what kind of cheap vermin and trash Backlund and Skoaland are.

It was a typical night and I'd enjoyed another glorious evening of combat in the ring. After my wrestler, due totally to my brilliant leadership, did indeed thrash his foe, leaving him a dead hulk in the ring, I showered and dressed.

Fred Blassie was about to step out on the town. You know how the dames love Blassie. You know how I can walk anywhere in the world, in New York, in Brazil, in Thailand, and this face, this mind, this body, is grabbed by millions of

Blassie had the telephone company establish a four-way call among Hulk Hogan, Killer Khan, Stan Hansen, and himself to discuss what measures they would take to avenge the alleged parking lot attack by Bob Backlund and Arnold Skoaland.

This firsthand story might shock the WWF. Fred Blassie claims Arnold Skoaland and Bob Backlund attacked him in the parking lot. Blassie has all the medical proof he needs. He has doctors to back up his claims. But only Blassie saw this attack. There were no witnesses. Or were there?

broads and wanted by fans for personal appearances, to run for office, to make blessings, kiss babies, whatever, the name of Blassie is legendary and everyone knows that.

Especially fat-boy Skoaland and Howdy Doody Backlund. They cannot stand my wonderful style of wrestling. For years, fat-boy Skoaland has been jealous of me. He tried to have me blacklisted from wrestling, by passing foul rumors I cheated, I did this, I did that, that little tub of lard is only jealous of me because I'm better-looking, I have a better body, a better face, more hair, more talent, more brains, and better wrestlers than him. It eats away at Skoaland for me to enjoy the respect of the entire world.

As for Backlund, I almost wish I could hate him. But I feel more sorry for him than anything else. He's a mindless wimp who unthinkingly obeys every word of Skoaland, the every command of fat-boy Skoaland. Backlund hasn't had an original thought in his whole life. He's nothing but a farm boy with hay for brains and manure for guts.

Blassie has one of his bandages removed to show one of the injuries he suffered (above). Fred points out one of his alleged attackers to a nurse (below).

And that's why I turned the bum down when he first came into pro wrestling. He wanted to come under my wing, hah, imagine that, Blassie managing a loser like Backlund, a fool, a yokel, I'd rather be dead.

But that stuck in Backlund's craw for a long time. He didn't like the idea of getting rejected, he knew, deep down, that fat-boy Skoaland would ruin his career.

So you had yokel Backlund, a big, dumb farmhand filled with resentment and hate, and fat-boy Skoaland, a tub of lard with mozzarella cheese for brains, jealous of Blassie, hating Blassie, knowing he could never equal me.

And what do they do? They lay in wait like two vermin rats in the night. They wait until I get out of the arena, sign the millions of autographs from my adoring fans, go to my car, and they jump me. Backlund grabs me from behind and Skoaland starts punching at me. I fight back, kick Skoaland in the stomach, whirl around and am about to get Backlund when I feel a horrible pain in the left side of my back. They slashed me back there. I fell down, unable to move, thinking this was it, they had won, they had finally whipped me and stomped me. Luckily, a security guard arrived on the scene and they ran away.

So that's how I ended up in this hospital bed. I didn't want to press charges. I told the cops that Fred Blassie has his own brand of vengeance, that Blassie doesn't need any help, that Blassie knows who he has to take care of and how, and that it was just too bad for them.

Yes, Arnold Skoaland and Bob Backlund put me in this hospital bed. And they'll pay for that treachery with their lives. □

THE VON ERICHS: HARLEY RACE'S ROADBLOCK TO THE NWA TITLE

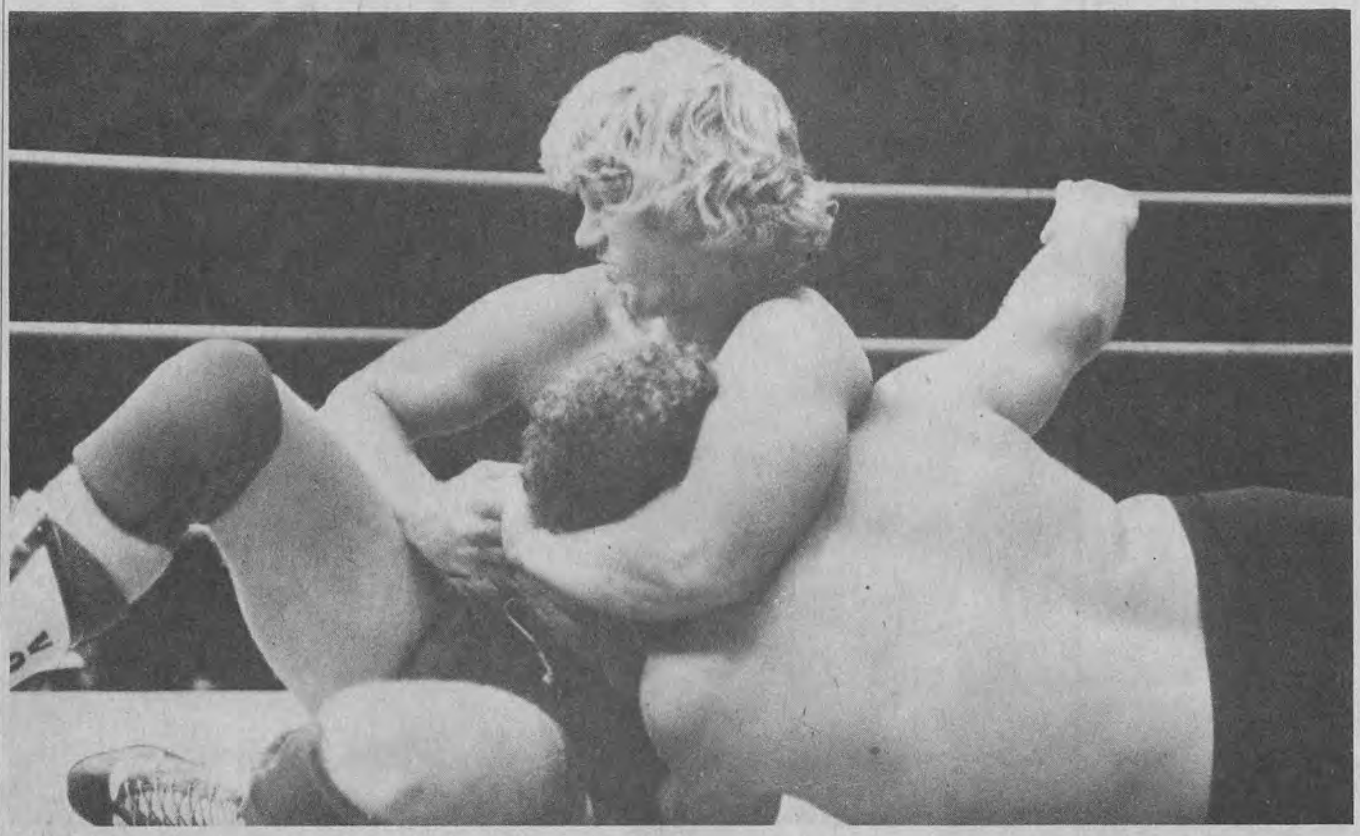
Harley Race continues his determined drive for an unprecedented seventh claim to the NWA belt. Three brothers are equally determined to prevent his success in achieving a possible title match. It's three against one, but Race is only beginning to fight

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER

AS HARLEY RACE continues to redevelop his own wrestling style and mannerisms to the point where he may again come into contention for the NWA title, he continues to come up against barriers preventing him from getting there as soon as he would like.

Make no mistake about it: Race would like to get there. He is determined to become the wrestler who stands alone in the record books: an unprecedented seventh heavyweight championship. Presently, Race is tied with Lou Thesz, both having held the NWA championship six times. One more claim to the belt would catapult Race into wrestling immortality.

"Of course, that's precisely the reason I'm working myself the way I am," explained Race. "I know



His destination is clear. Harley Race wants nothing more out of life than to stand alone in the record books as the only seven-time NWA champion. He knows, however, that he must cross through a triple barrier set up by the Von Erich brothers before he can reach that destination. And David (above and left) presents Harley with quite a challenge.

about the record books, I'm well aware of the fact that I'm now tied with Thesz, and I know that if I can stand alone in the books, rather than being lumped with someone else, I can finally prove to the world that I am indeed the best of the best, a man to be reckoned with, a wrestler to command the respect of everyone for all time."

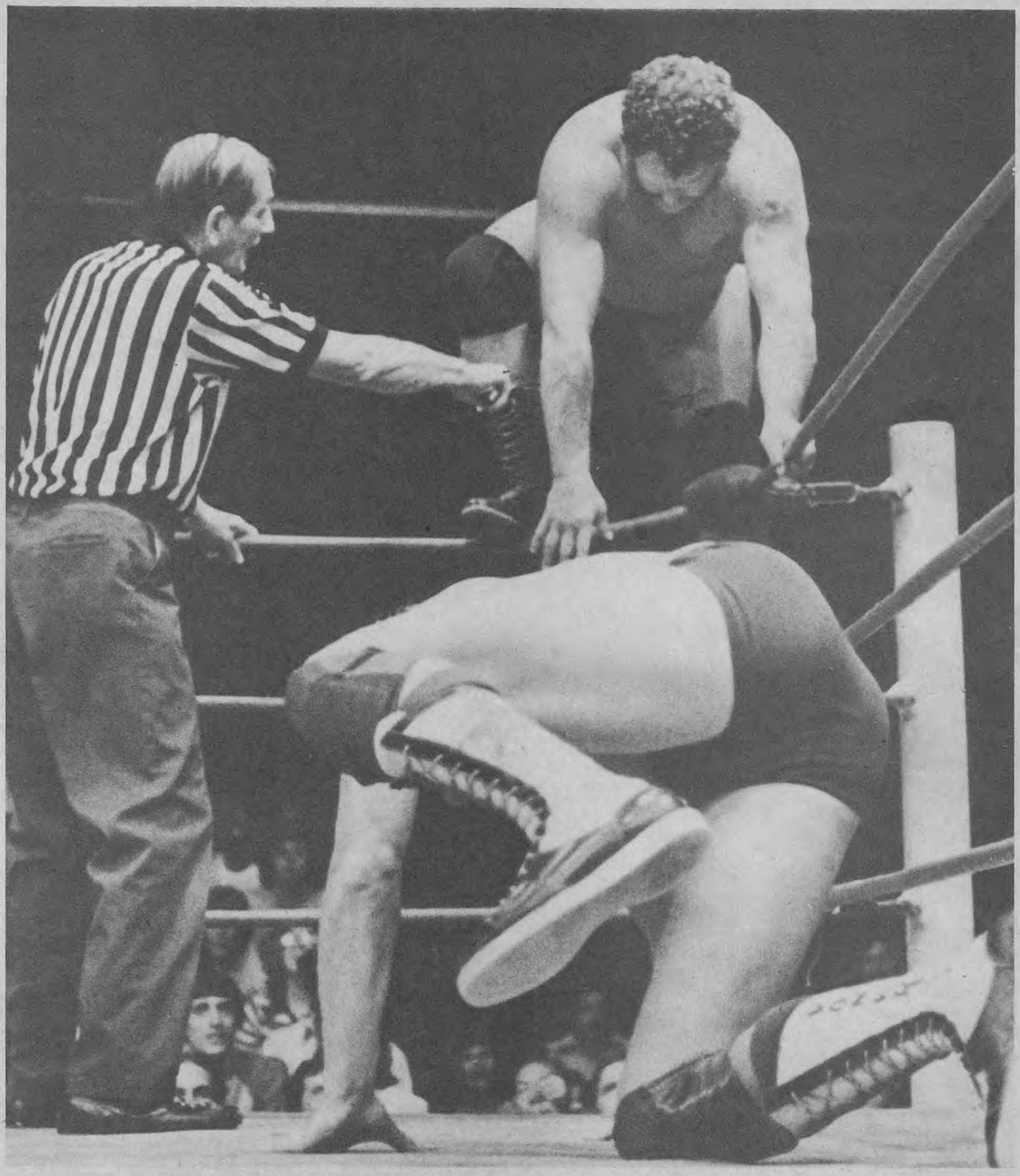
The crux of Race's plan to reclaim the title involves a realignment of his wrestling style and a restructuring of his entire method of operations.

"Too many people know what to expect from me," said Race. "By starting from scratch, by creating what is in effect a brand new wrestling style, I will be able to wrench the title away from whoever the unfortunate slob is who happens to hold it by the time I get there. I hope it's Rhodes, because I have some particular presents for him once I get around to meeting that blimp again."

Unfortunately for Race, the time when he will be wrestling for the title is getting to be further and further away. A family triumvirate stands in his way, and the way things look now, it will be some time before Race is able to overcome their challenge.

Kerry, Kevin, and David Von Erich: Harley Race's three hurdles that seem to get higher and higher with each match.

In a recent match in St. Louis, Race went up against David Von Erich. For a good part of the match, things stood just about



Race is warned by the referee, but nothing or no one is going to prevent him from leaping Von Erich from the top turnbuckle. Just as, in his mind, nothing or no one is going to stop him from reclaiming the NWA belt.

even. But that's not good enough for Race, not good enough at all.

"What I would like to be able to do," explained Race, "is to just brush these three guys aside like so much tissue paper. It's getting to be ridiculous, though. When I met David in St. Louis, I found that he was a lot stronger than I anticipated. He also has a lot more stamina and endurance in the ring than I bargained for."

Regardless, Race continues to face the Von Erich brothers.

"This is the goal I have set for myself," Race said. "I can't move along to the next step of my plan until I take care of the Von Erichs. Once I'm rid of these guys, the rest will be easy. For now, though, I have to wrestle them, I have to keep concentrating on them until I am victorious. It's a major step

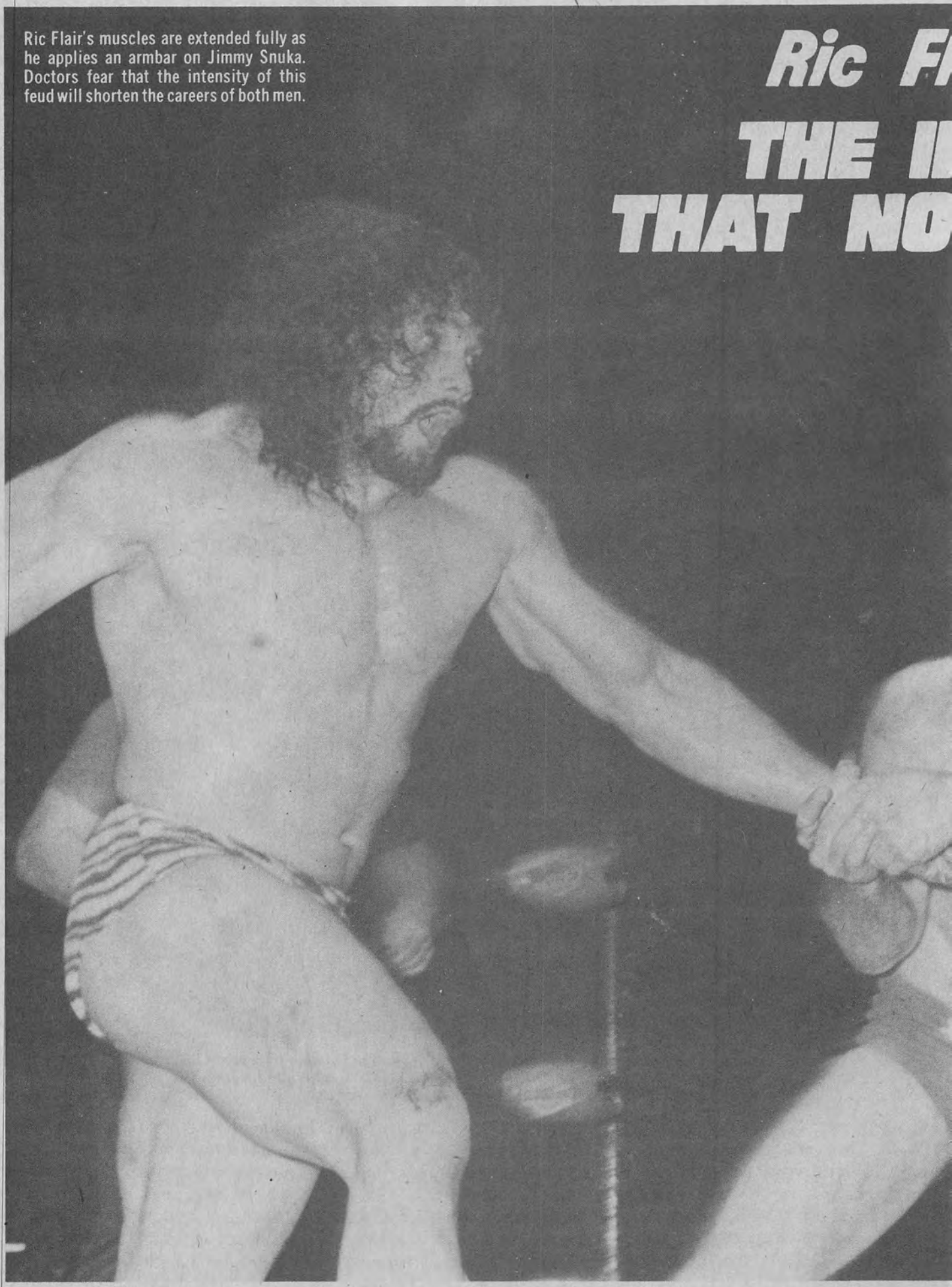
(Continued on page 56)

Ric Flair's muscles are extended fully as he applies an armbar on Jimmy Snuka. Doctors fear that the intensity of this feud will shorten the careers of both men.

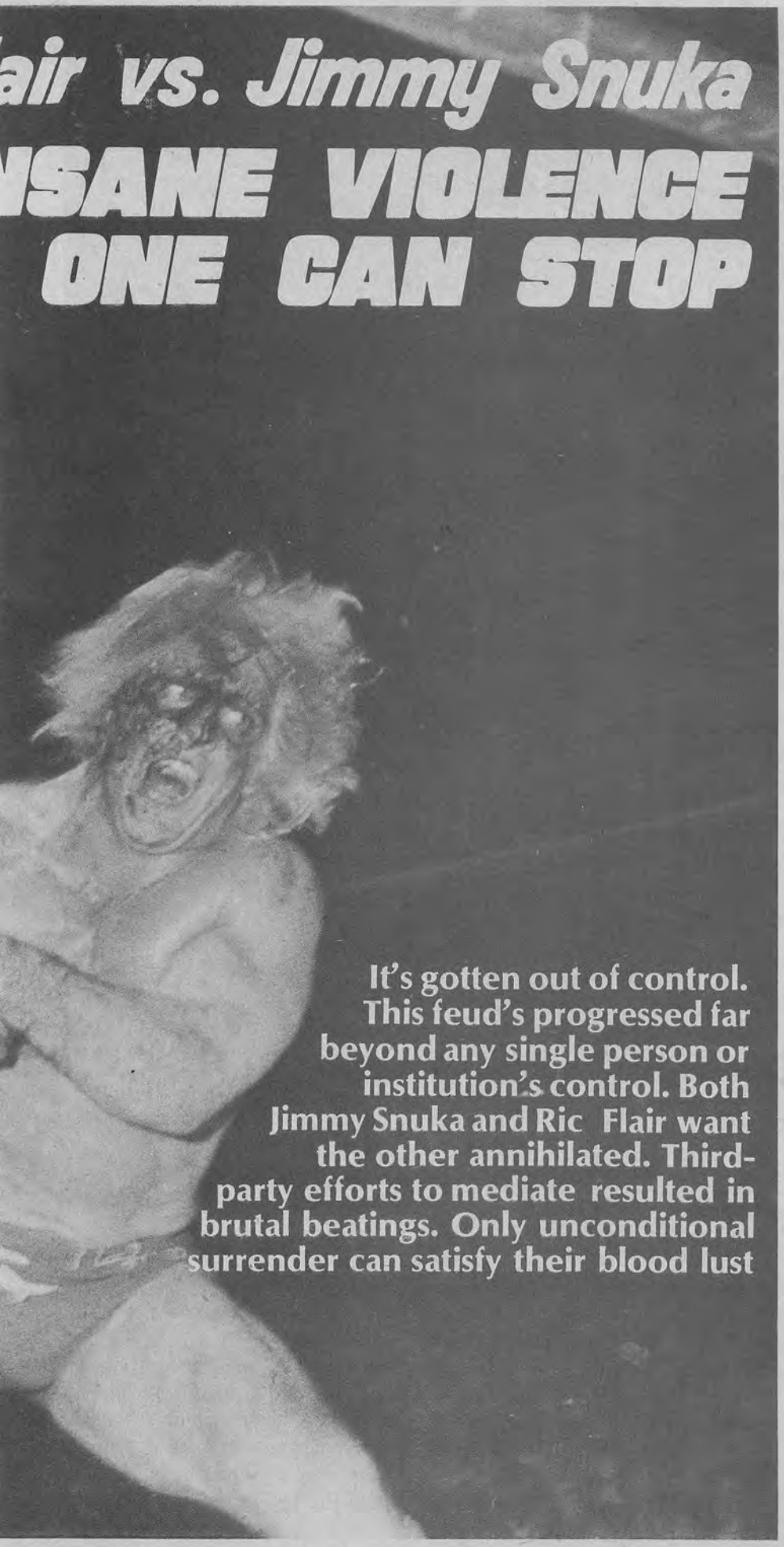
Ric F

THE I

THAT NO



air vs. Jimmy Snuka
NSANE VIOLENCE ONE CAN STOP


It's gotten out of control. This feud's progressed far beyond any single person or institution's control. Both Jimmy Snuka and Ric Flair want the other annihilated. Third-party efforts to mediate resulted in brutal beatings. Only unconditional surrender can satisfy their blood lust

THE DOCTOR TOOK a deep breath. He looked at his patient, Ric Flair. He then looked down at the chart.

"I have here," the doctor began, "your medical chart from this year and last. The difference between the two is staggering. Your body has taken more punishment in 12 months than I thought was humanly possible. We both know why."

Flair looked down at his hands, swollen and stiff, and said nothing.

"In your profession," the doctor continued, "one must expect some injury. However, the continuous assaults you allow your body to absorb is suicidal. At this rate, you'll be barely able to move in five years.

"Now we both know what and who is doing this to you. Jimmy Snuka is also my patient. His injuries are just as bad as yours, if that gives you any satisfaction." Flair smiled happily, proving it did. The doctor shook his head warily before adding, "You're both risking ending your careers early."

Flair rose as if to leave. He put his hands on the doctor's desk and stared at him hard. "That's a risk I've got to take."

"Why?" the doctor asked in a quiet voice. "Why do two healthy young men have to destroy each other?"

"If you gotta ask, doc, you can't understand."

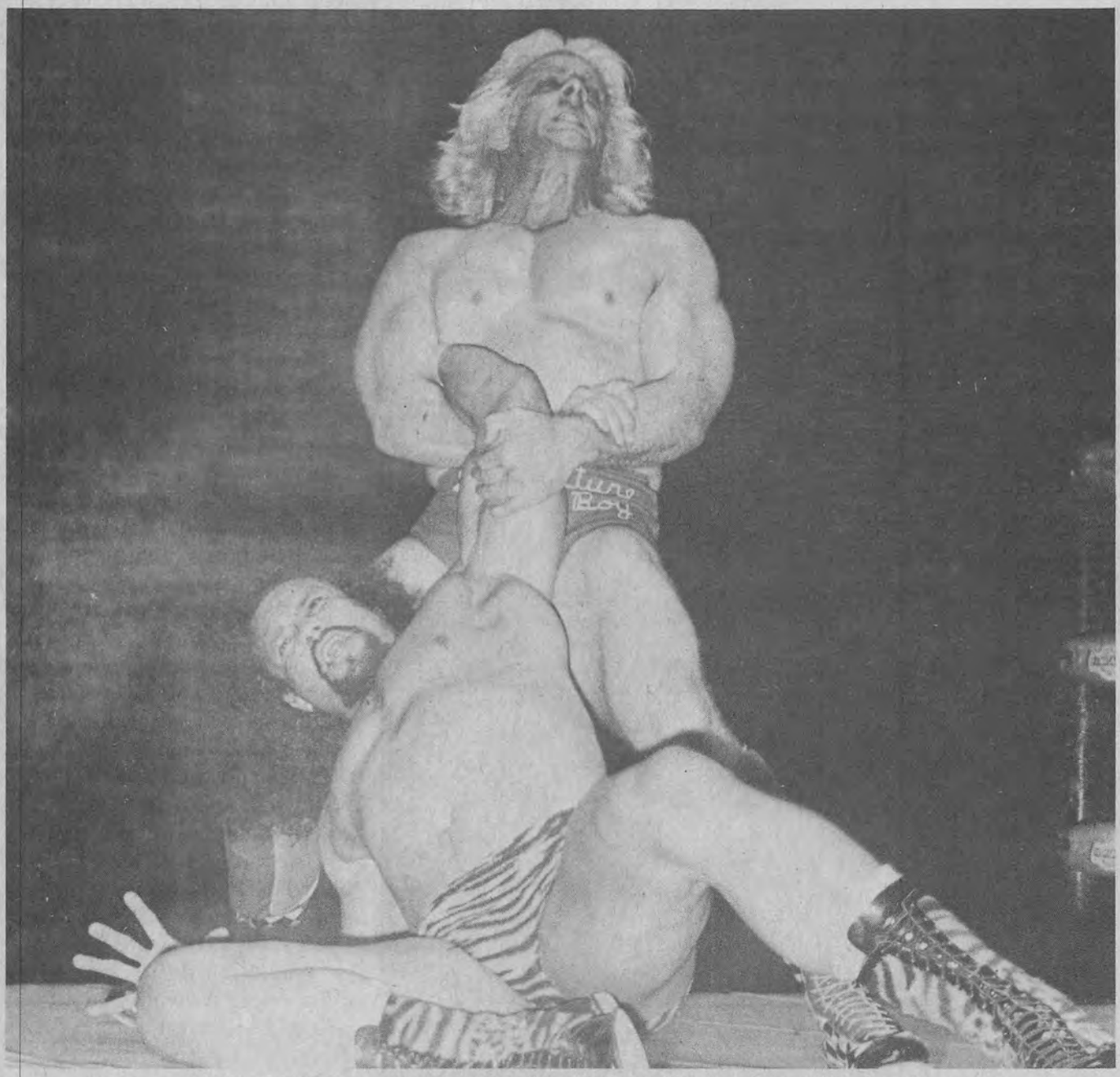
"Just as I thought. You don't know, either."

"It isn't something you know, doc. It just is—like air. You don't have to understand air to breathe."

"Make sense! When you were a rulebreaker, Snuka was a fan favorite. The two of you went at it like wildcats battling for life. Then you became a scientific wrestler, so Snuka becomes a rulebreaker. Once again, you're at each other's throats. It's like two magnets of opposite poles that have to attract."

"That's as good an explanation as any."

"Don't you care that your career



At this point in the match, Ric Flair will settle for nothing less than pulling Jimmy Snuka's arm out of its socket. The two seem unconcerned with any future effects this feud might have.

is in jeopardy?"

"More than you can imagine, doc."

"Then why?"

"Ask Snuka."

"I have. He makes the same evasions. I suppose I should just give up on you two. You're only destroying each other. You certainly deserve each other. Ah, to hell with it!"

Flair smiled bravely, though it was clearly a strain. No one had to tell Flair about the toll his war with Snuka was exacting on his body. Getting up in the morning was an ordeal. Hot showers in the morning barely relieved the stiffness. Flair didn't have to struggle with his smile when he thought about Snuka suffering the same way.

Snuka once said, "There's no reason and every reason to make me hate Flair. Now that I don't care what the fans think, I'll do anything in my power—anything—to ruin the guy. There's something about him that makes me sick. As long as Ric Flair wrestles, I'm a failure. When he's finally finished, then I'll be a success."

Even their best friends can't understand why their feud has reached these insanely dangerous proportions.

"Ric is the kind of guy," one friend says, "who thinks he's the most important guy alive. It's incredible to me that he'd risk his career for any one person. I didn't think he could hate that much. When he's against Jimmy Snuka, he becomes another person. I don't know who that person is, but he scares the hell out of me!"

(Continued on page 51)

The Experts Disagree

IT BEGAN INNOCENTY enough as an editorial luncheon for some of the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* staff. It soon deteriorated into a frantic melee of verbal abuse and ridicule, all because of the brewing feud between Tommy Rich and Ken Patera.

Managing Editor Bill Apter was telling everyone about his recent trip to Georgia.

"I saw the match where Patera took the state title away from Tommy Rich," said Apter. "If you ask me, Patera better watch himself, 'cause Rich will be on his case in no time."

There was a look of horror from the diners at the next table as Dan Shocket nearly gagged on his food.

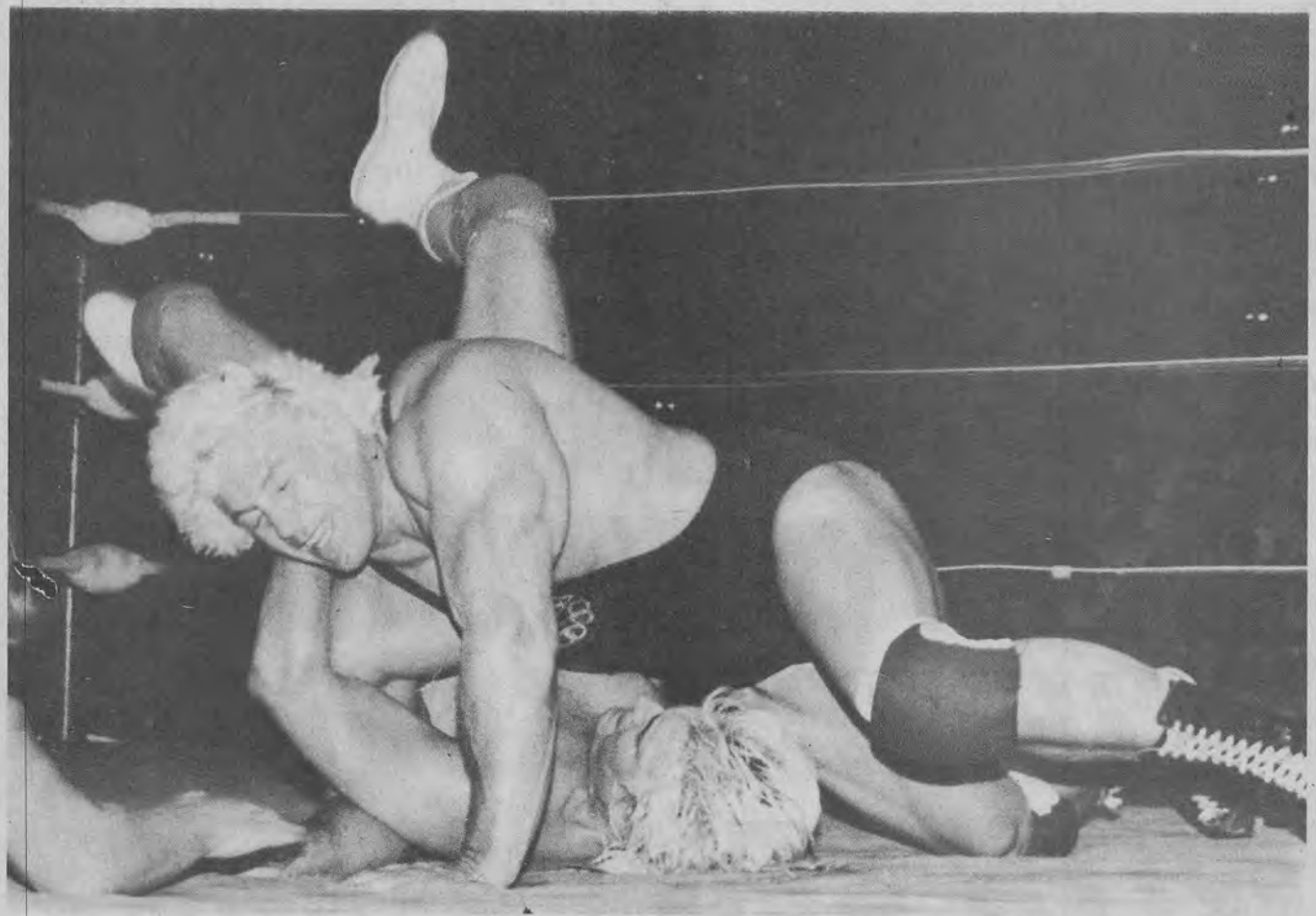
"You've got to be joking, Bill," cried Shocket. "You mean you honestly think that Rich is going to regain the title?"

"Of course he is," Apter replied. "Look at the guy: he's strong, he's capable, he was NWA champ . . . it should be a snap for him to take care of Patera."

CAN TOMMY RICH SURVIVE A FEUD WITH KEN PATERA?

Ken Patera dethroned Tommy Rich from the Georgia state championship, sparking a feud which continues to grow in anger and intensity to this very day. Two of wrestling's finest journalists found themselves caught up in this brutal dispute, launching a feud of their own

PHOTOS BY BILL APTER



As the Ken Patera-Tommy Rich feud builds to a crescendo, the disagreement is not confined to the ring combatants. Many people, PWI's Bill Apter and Dan Shocket included, are at odds as to who the eventual victor will be. Above, Rich pushes out of a Patera pin attempt.

Shocket made the mistake of having a mouth full of food again as Apter spoke. Fortunately the waitress knew the Heimlick maneuver for aiding a choking person. When he finally recovered, Shocket was still outraged.

"NWA champ?!?" he said, taking three or four hefty gulps out of the water glass, "now sure, I *know* you are joking. Rich is so feeble he couldn't even hold on to the NWA title for more than a few days! You expect him to be able to come back and reclaim a title he never should have held in the first place?"

"Listen, Shocket," said Apter firmly, emphasizing his words by stabbing the air directly in front of Dan's nose with a French fry, "Tommy Rich is the single most skillful wrestler in the Georgia area. If anyone deserves any title, particularly the Georgia state title, it's Tommy Rich.

"Furthermore," Apter continued, "your boy Patera can't even win a match for himself unless he uses illegal maneuvers. I don't call that wrestling, I call that cowardice."

Editor-in-Chief Peter King interrupted the "discussion" in an attempt to bring order and sanity to the luncheon proceedings.

"Hold on, you two," he said, "let's try and clear things up a bit. Bill, you say that Tommy Rich will be able to handle a feud with Ken Patera?"

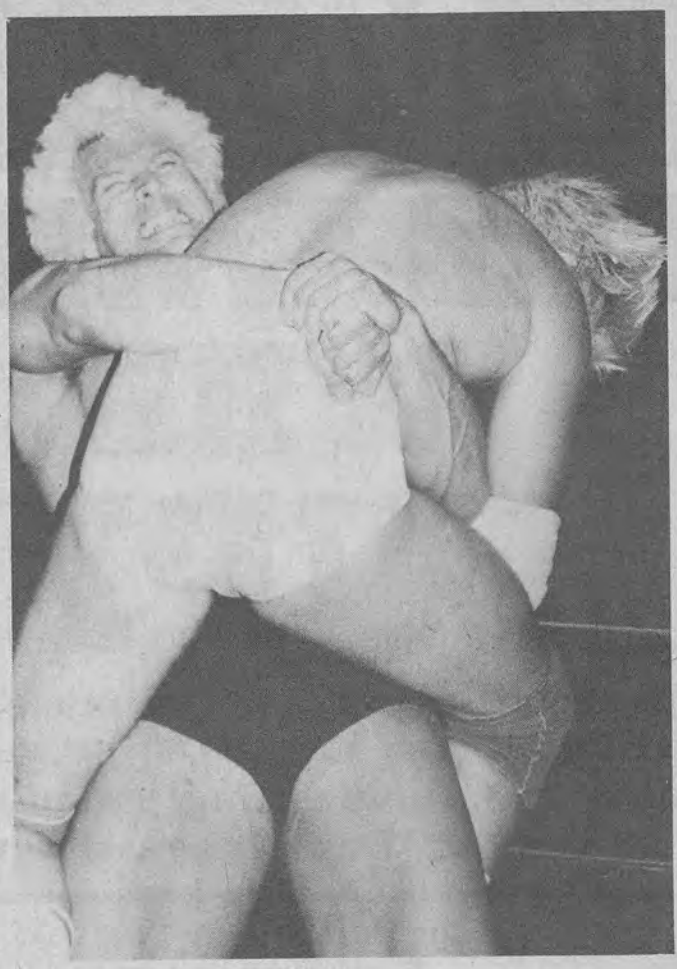
"Of course," replied Apter, "there's no question about it. Rich can . . ."

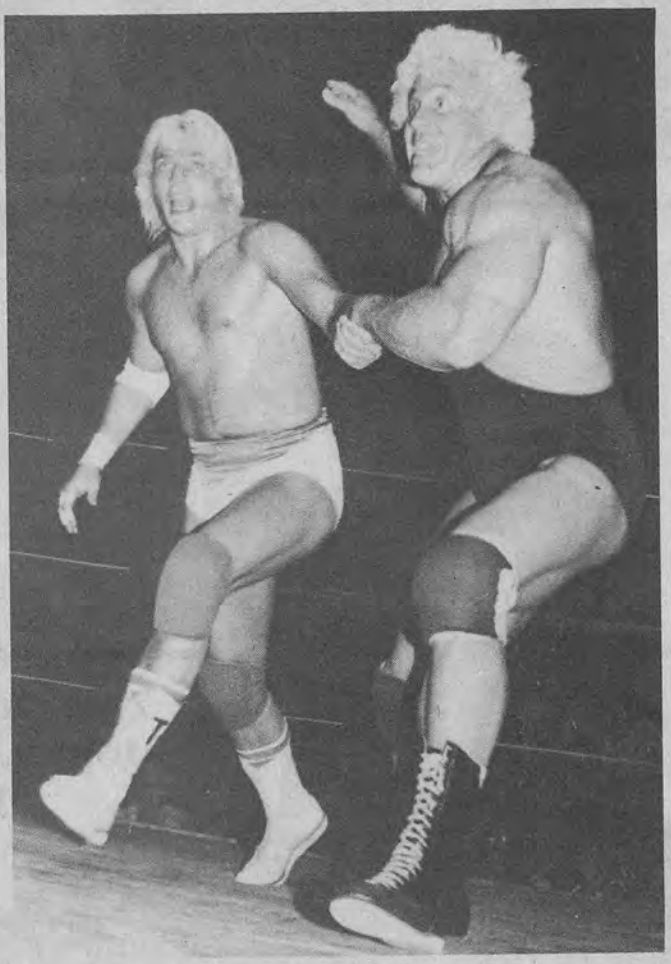
"All right, hold it there," King interrupted. "Shocket, you say that Patera will be able to take care of Rich?"

"Mincemeat, Chief, absolutely," said Dan.

"So let's look at these two guys logically," King said. "Patera's got power going for him, he's got the swinging neckbreaker, which is one of the most powerful moves in all of sport. On the other hand, Rich is a highly skilled . . ."

"Look, I don't really want to interrupt," interrupted Shocket with disgust in his voice, "but as far as I'm concerned, there isn't even any question here. We have no reason to discuss this





Patera, doubtlessly one of the strongest men in all of professional sport, squeezes the wind from Rich's lungs (above left). Remaining in complete control, Patera flings Tommy into the opposite turnbuckle (above right). Rich, ever resourceful, slips his hands inside Patera's and pries his way out of a bearhug (left).

point further. The answer has already been given: Ken Patera has the Georgia title, he took it from Tommy Rich, Rich has nothing. That's where things stand now. Patera has shown he's better than Rich, and I see no need for further discussion."

Apter came back with uncharacteristic anger and brutality lacing his voice.

"You sawed-off runt," he shouted, "you wouldn't know the difference between a wristlock and a wristwatch! Patera's winning of the title was a complete fluke, if I've ever seen one. It would be just like you to try and win a title on a fluke and then try to hold that up as a championship quality match."

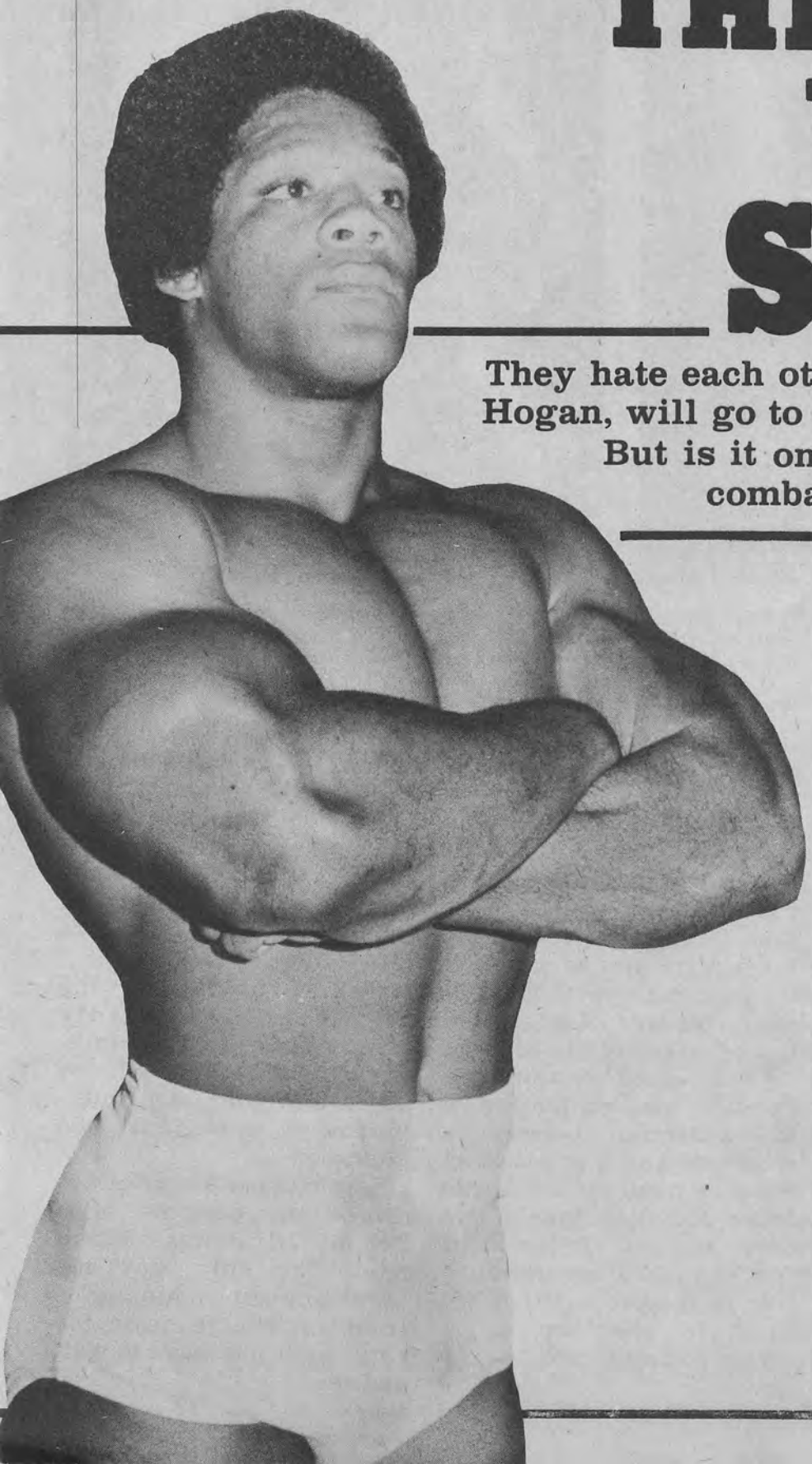
"Be realistic," pleaded Shocket, "when will you wake up and realize that Rich could wrestle Jerry Lewis and still lose. He's a mess, and he doesn't even deserve to be considered along with great men like Ken Patera."

Not surprisingly, the argument was hardly resolved during lunchtime. In fact, it spread back to the office and continued intermittently throughout the afternoon.

So the experts continue to debate the outcome of a Tommy Rich/Ken Patera feud. The only way the argument can eventually be resolved, though, is in the ring. We'll just have to wait and see. □

Tony Atlas vs.

THE WAR
WREST
SUPE



They hate each other. These two muscula
Hogan, will go to any lengths to prove th
But is it only wrestling jealousy w
combat? Or is there another re

THEY SIMPLY DON'T like each other. Let's amend that statement. They hate each other. Hate each other with every fiber of their muscular bodies.

"Atlas?" Hulk Hogan laughed. "You call that guy a wrestler? I've seen guys on the beach who can wrestle better than Atlas. That boy can't hold a candle to a lotta people who are discriminated against 'cause they don't bow and scrape to the fans."

"Hulk Hogan's a loser," said Atlas. "He ain't done nothin' his big mouth said he would do. All he can do is shoot off his big mouth and make a lotta big mouthwaves 'cause he knows he can't do nothin' in the ring. A guy like Hogan ain't a rassler but an over-sized bum."

This feud has been simmering for some time now. Unlike many feuds, where the protagonists find themselves embroiled in something they never intended, the Atlas-Hogan wars were inevitable, even before they ended up in the same area.

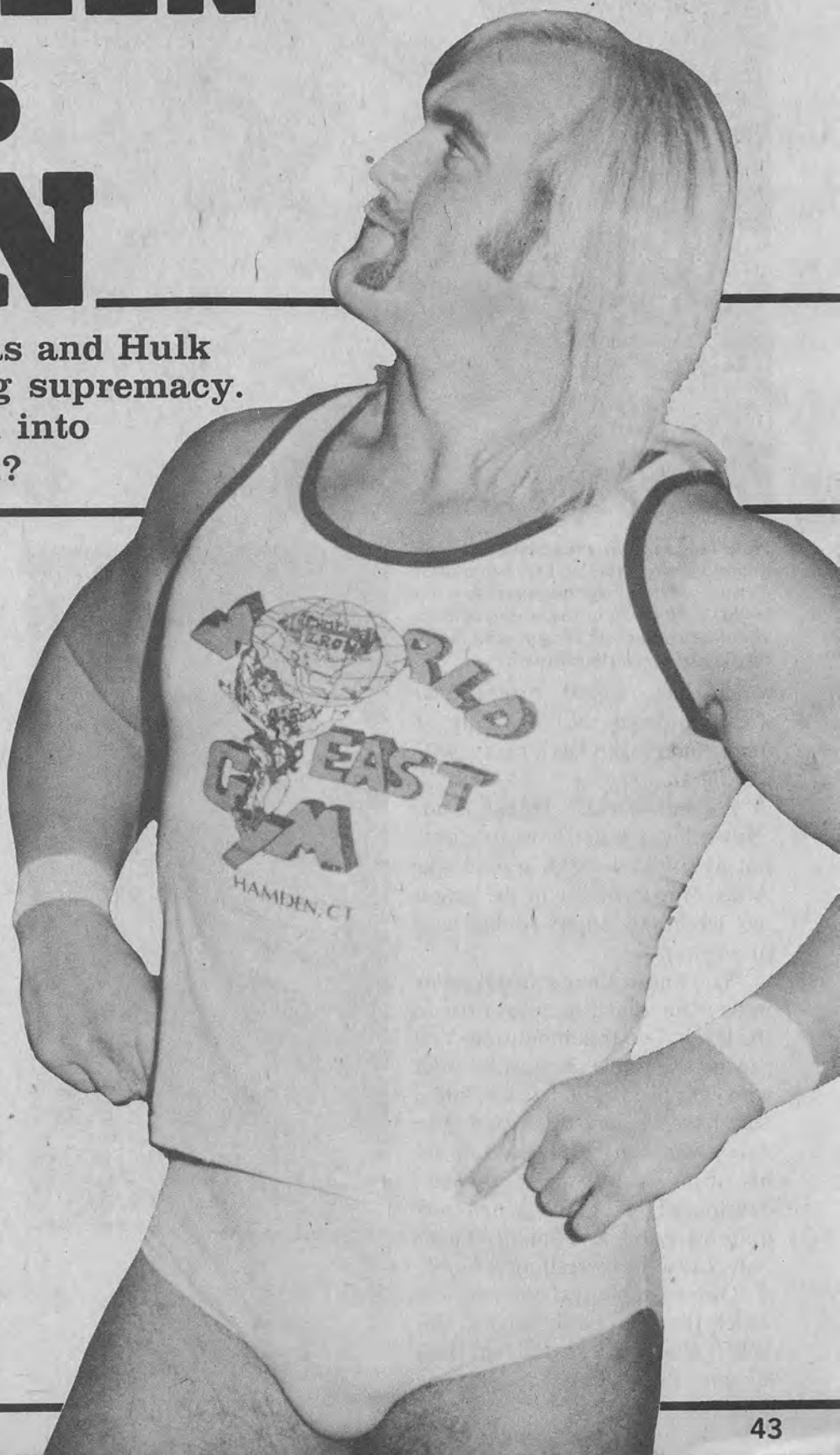
Why? Because in some respects,

Hulk Hogan

PHOTOS BY STU SAKS & BILL APTER

BETWEEN
TLING'S
RMEN

r behemoths, Tony Atlas and Hulk
eir respective wrestling supremacy.
vhich propels both men into
ason for their brutal feud?



they are quite similar. That remark prompts angry denials.

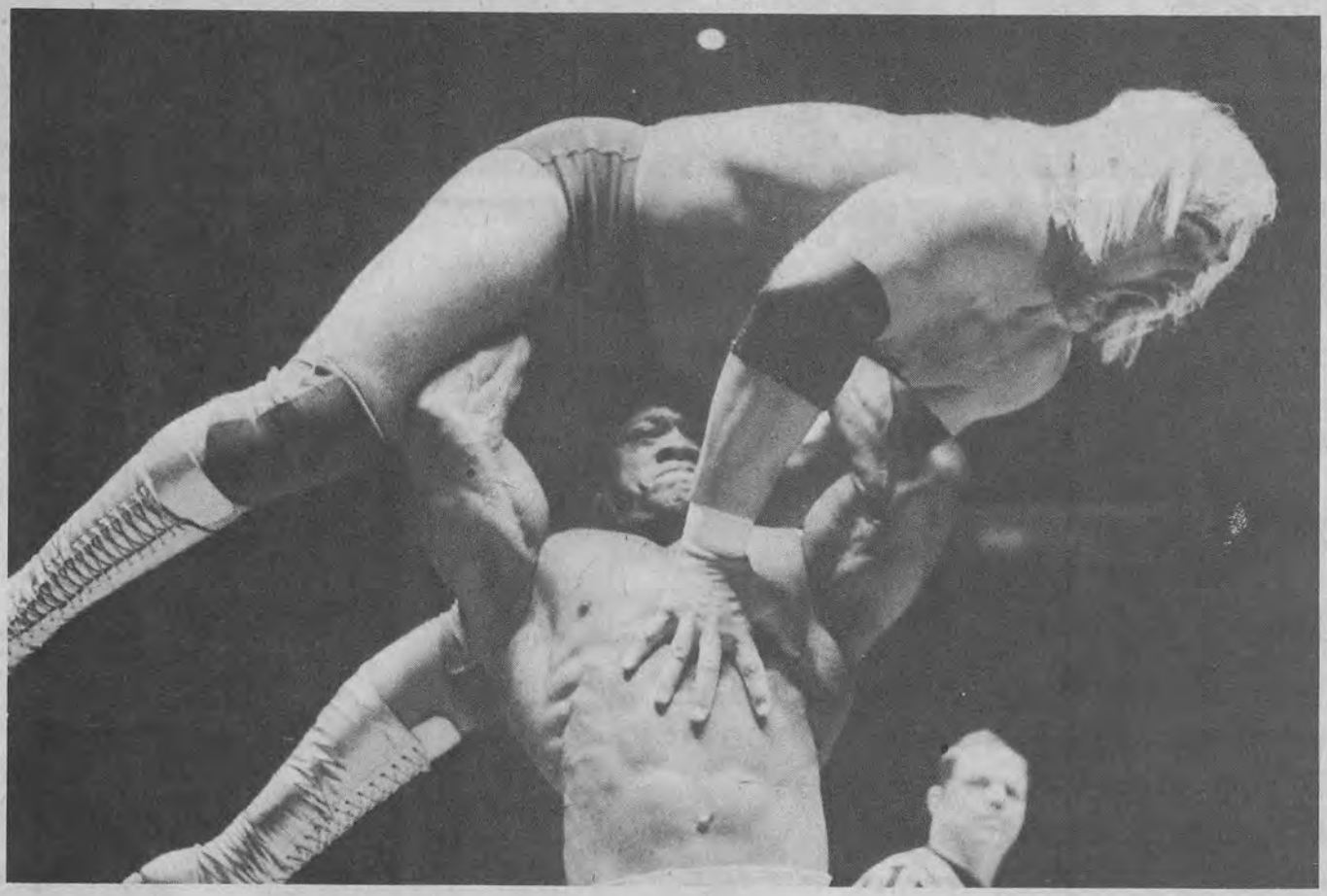
"Ain't nothin' you can say in the whole world that would link me to Atlas," said Hogan. "Just 'cause I got a great body and that Atlas thinks he got a great body ain't no reason to say there's any similarities at all."

For once, Atlas agrees with his foe.

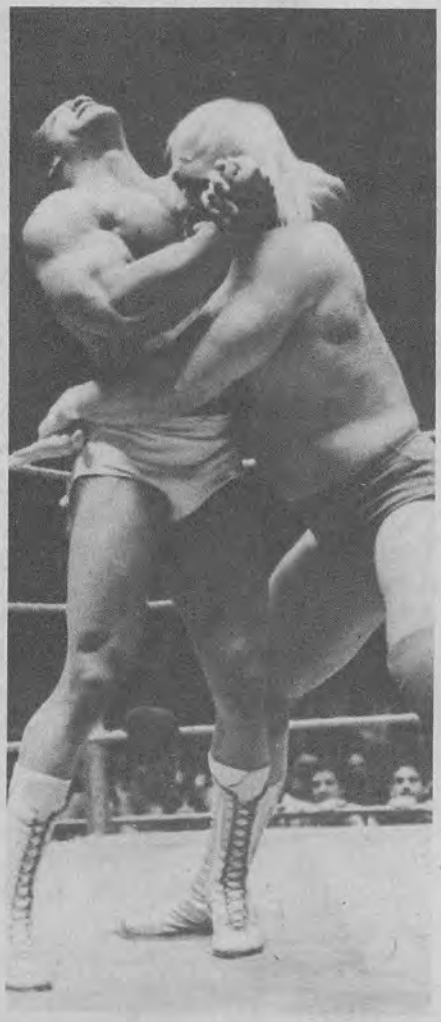
"Lotsa people look at us and all they can see is our physiques. They figure since Hogan's built himself up, and I'm Mr. USA and been winnin' body-buildin' championships for a long time now, they think we got similar techniques or somethin'.

"The truth of the matter is, Hogan uses his strength for evil while I use my strength for good. Just look at the way we rassle. All Hogan can do is break the rules. He only knows how to cheat, nothin' more than that. If he's so good, then how come he's gotta cheat? If he's so strong, how come he gotta cheat? If he's so talented, then how come he gotta cheat?"

Atlas raises an age-old question



Hulk Hogan wraps his powerful arms around Tony Atlas' waist, leaving the former Mr. USA gasping for air (right). Nobody in the arena is more shocked than Hulk Hogan with Atlas' display of strength (above).



which has nagged professional wrestling from the beginning of time. And Hogan has a ready, self-serving answer.

"I don't cheat," Hogan said. "Not a bit. I don't have to cheat, not when I'm wrestlin' a punk like Atlas. What you see in the ring is me havin' to stoop to his level of wrestlin'.

"You know, there's an old sayin' in wrestlin' that you always rise to the level of your competition. You can be the single greatest wrestler who ever lived, which is me, and if you have to wrestle a bum like Atlas who can barely stretch out his arms 'cause he's so over-developed, then I ain't gonna look quite as good as I might. That's only 'cause I'm wrestling a bum.

"Gimme some real competition, which there probably ain't in this WWF, and you'll see the real Hulk Hogan. But I don't see anyone capable of rising up to my level," Hogan continued.

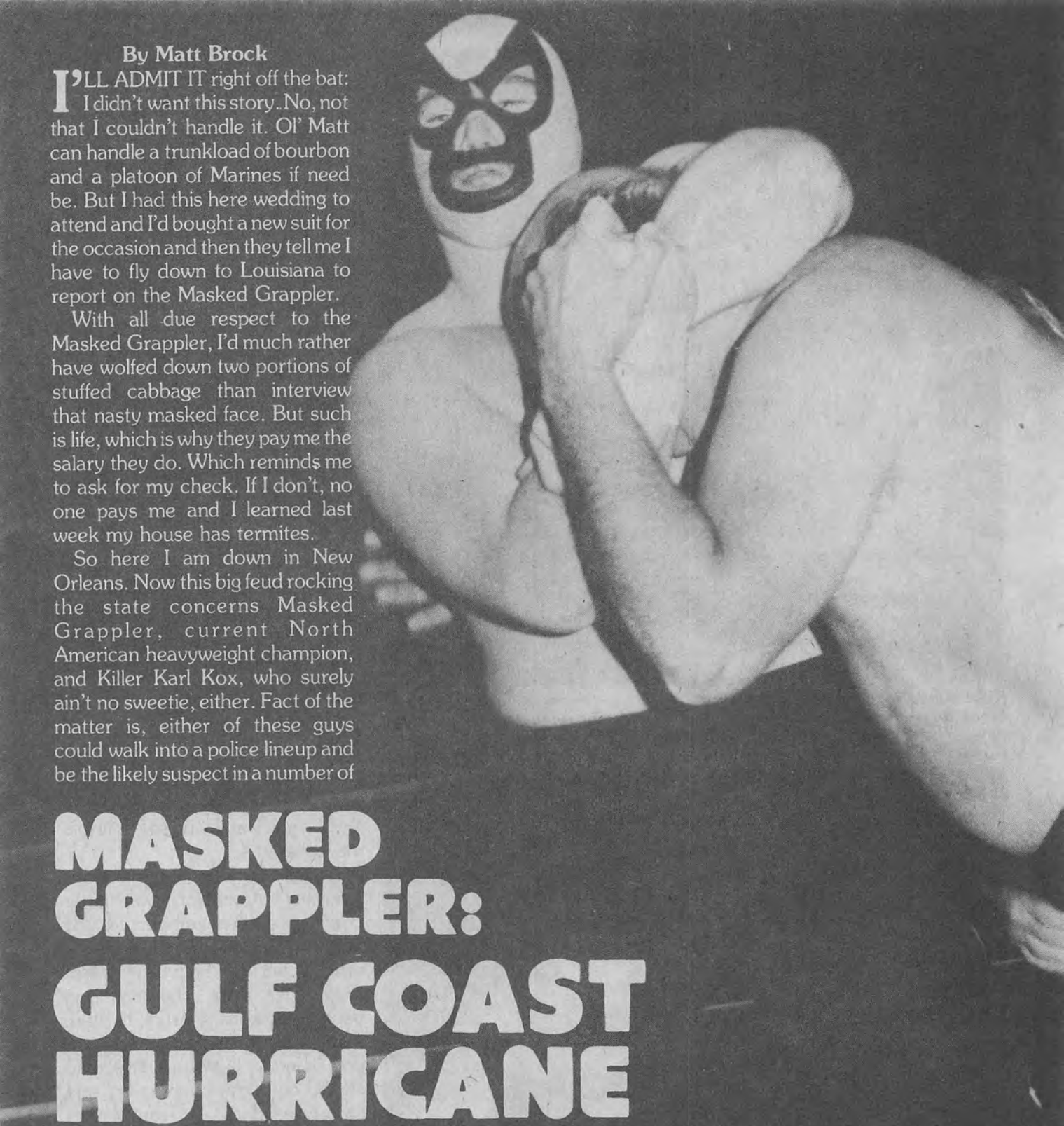
Yet the critical difference, and the fuel for their feud, rests in their different approaches to building their bodies. Hogan builds his superb physique through more floor exercises like pushups and lifting heavier weights, while Atlas pumps lighter weights in greater repetition to gain definition in his muscles.

"Hogan don't know the first thing 'bout exercisin'," thundered Atlas. "He thinks he can do 200 pushups and that gives him strength. Well, my strength is more useful in the ring than his strength."

"Don't take much to keep pumpin' those light weights," said Hogan. "Naturally it don't, 'cause Tony Atlas does it."

Perhaps the only method to settling this violent feud is in the ring. Only there can the dissimilar styles and common contempt be settled. One match between the two is history.

Both men eagerly await future battles. □



By Matt Brock

I'LL ADMIT IT right off the bat: I didn't want this story. No, not that I couldn't handle it. Ol' Matt can handle a trunkload of bourbon and a platoon of Marines if need be. But I had this here wedding to attend and I'd bought a new suit for the occasion and then they tell me I have to fly down to Louisiana to report on the Masked Grappler.

With all due respect to the Masked Grappler, I'd much rather have wolfed down two portions of stuffed cabbage than interview that nasty masked face. But such is life, which is why they pay me the salary they do. Which reminds me to ask for my check. If I don't, no one pays me and I learned last week my house has termites.

So here I am down in New Orleans. Now this big feud rocking the state concerns Masked Grappler, current North American heavyweight champion, and Killer Karl Kox, who surely ain't no sweetie, either. Fact of the matter is, either of these guys could walk into a police lineup and be the likely suspect in a number of

MASKED GRAPPLER: GULF COAST HURRICANE

Special correspondent Matt Brock traveled to Louisiana, simply to see Masked Grappler up close. Perhaps Matt wished he didn't. Rarely in wrestling has there been a man as cruel and depraved as Masked Grappler. What worries many is whether Grappler has become unstoppable

PHOTOS BY STU SAKS

Killer Karl Kox desperately grabs for The Grappler's mask in an attempt to break an armlock (above). Though Kox has become a fan favorite in recent times, The Grappler's tactics drove him into a rulebreaking frenzy. A bloodied Kox pulls Grappler from the ring and attacks him with the bell (below).

federal crimes. But their after-hours business doesn't concern me, unless they invite me, which means I must tell them I can't drive a getaway car since my license was revoked seven years ago for practicing three-point turns on the Brooklyn Bridge.

Soon as I get into town I give Kox a call. Takes a while to get through. I figure he's giving another interview or something. Fifteen minutes goes by, I'm still on hold so I hang up and call again. Kox answers the phone and starts screaming at me how I hung up on him, no one ever hung up on him before, and if I want an interview, I should go do you-know-what before I'd ever get one again.

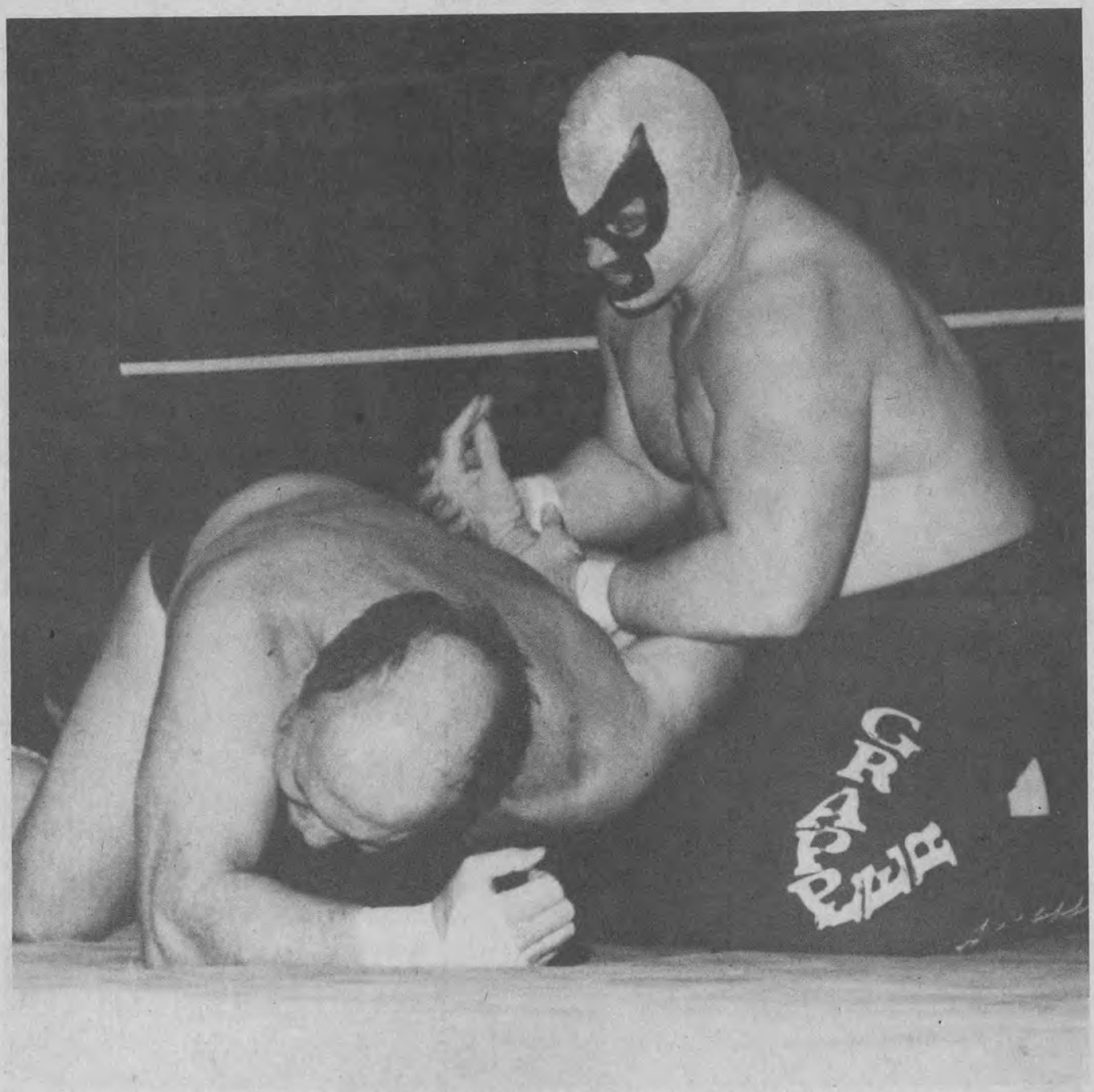
So far, not so good. To make matters worse, I find out an old girlfriend of mine is a grandmother with two 10-year-old grandsons. Course, she was much older than me when we dated, but you'll have to wait for my memoirs.

Maybe I was being remiss in not calling Grappler, but I thought I'd do this story on a different perspective, just hang back near ringside, try to be inconspicuous and all, just watch and see how this man operates.

At least I know I can make this following statement with utter confidence in its authenticity and validity: Masked Grappler is the cruelest wrestler I have ever seen. Ever, ever, ever. The man is a psycho, a sadist, a cruel, twisted, demented, whatever other word you want to throw in. This man should be put away in a very safe structure and the authorities should throw away the key.

He tried to maim Kox. Now, if you've ever seen one wrestler try to maim another, you know what I'm talking about. It is a sickening sight to behold. Not so much for any bloodshed because sometimes it isn't the bloodshed which turns the stomach. No, this operates on a deeper level.

Given, wrestling is the most violent sport in the world. But what



The Grappler is in his glory as Kox shouts out from the pain of his hammerlock. Matt Brock found The Grappler to be a twisted, cruel, and sadistic man.

possesses someone like Masked Grappler to want to hurt?

"It gives me pleasure in inflict pain on others," explained Grappler. "I derive great satisfaction watching another human being, a person of lesser worth than myself, squirm and twitch and cry out in agony. I enjoy the screams as I twist a limb out of place. I revel in the shrieks as I hear bones snapping apart.

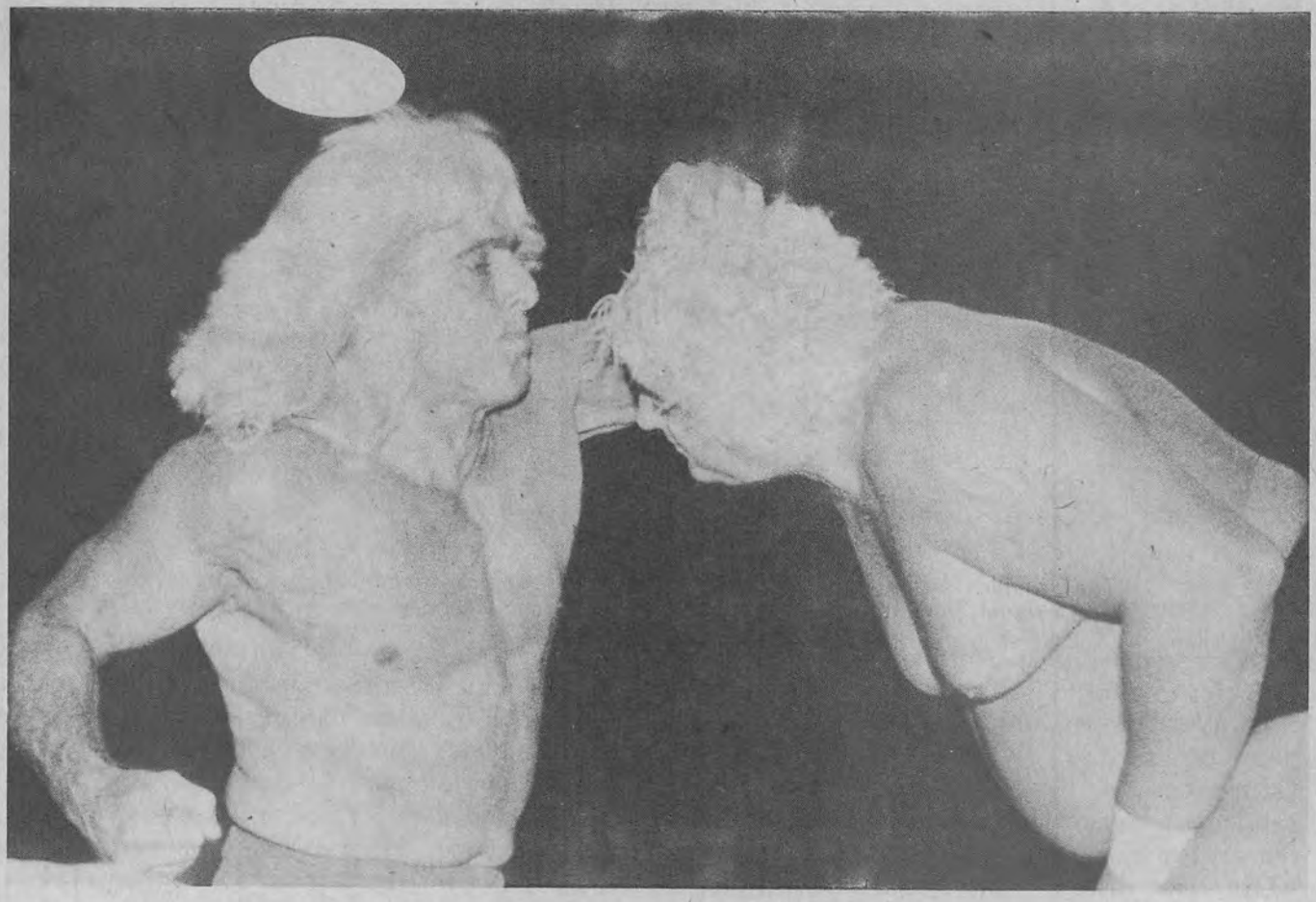
"Nothing makes me happier than to torture another person. It is what I live for, giving pain to others. I think it is quite a noble thing, to want to give to others. I could be selfish and want only for myself. I could not care about others. But I do. I want them to have all the pain in the world. I don't want them to be denied one excruciating sensation. I want them to feel the whole gamut of agony.

"Is there anything wrong with that? I think not. I think I am quite a wonderful human being to take the time to read books on inflicting pain, study up on the different ways of torture, and exert my energies and my strength to go into the ring knowing I will spend precious minutes of my life giving pain on another person.

"Yes, I am sure someday I will be given a humanitarian award for my efforts. Until then, I must accept only the hideous cries of anguish as my reward."

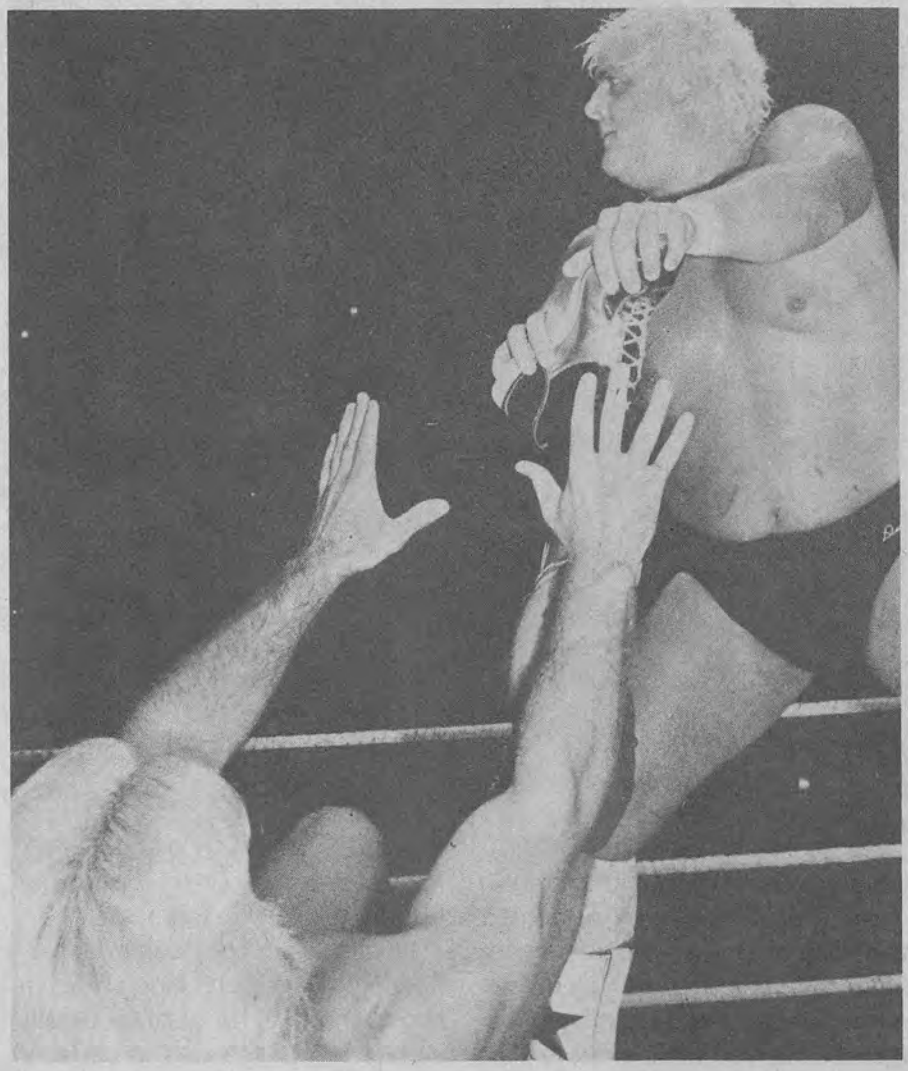
Now I ask you friends. Would you rather have spent a night listening to that sick turkey, or burrowed through six pounds of chopped liver? I rest my case. □

Ric Flair's Painful Choice:
HIS FANS OR DUSTY'S TITLE
He Can't Have Both!



Ric Flair stands at the crossroads of his career. He must make a choice that will affect the way he wrestles for the rest of his life. He must choose between devoting his life to pursuit of the title, or in dedication to his fans. He wants both, but must give up one

As a veteran wrestler, Ric Flair knows exactly what he has to do to take Dusty Rhodes' NWA title. He feels, though, that the aggressive tactics he needs to employ will turn off his fans. Holding Rhodes in a legscissors, Flair yanks back on the champion's head (above). Dusty prepares a counter-attack (below).



RIC FLAIR'S TERRITORY is Mid-Atlantic. In that area, he reigns supreme. Forget the fact that he isn't the NWA champ . . . as far as these people are concerned, there is no such animal as Dusty Rhodes. The only wrestler that matters is Ric Flair.

"Nature Boy is terrific!" declares Fred Vornle, a fan who lives just outside of Roanoke, Virginia. "He doesn't even have to wrestle Rhodes. As far as I am concerned, Flair is the champion already. In fact, it would probably be an insult to his integrity and his wrestling career to even step in the ring with that whale in the first place."

Vornle's attitude is typical of the kind of fervent, almost fanatical support that Flair commands. While having fans this loyal may on the surface be the ideal situation for any wrestler, it has caused Ric Flair to face a terribly difficult decision.

"I'm really stuck about what to do," says Flair. "I really enjoy the support of the fans, I like to have them behind me all the time.

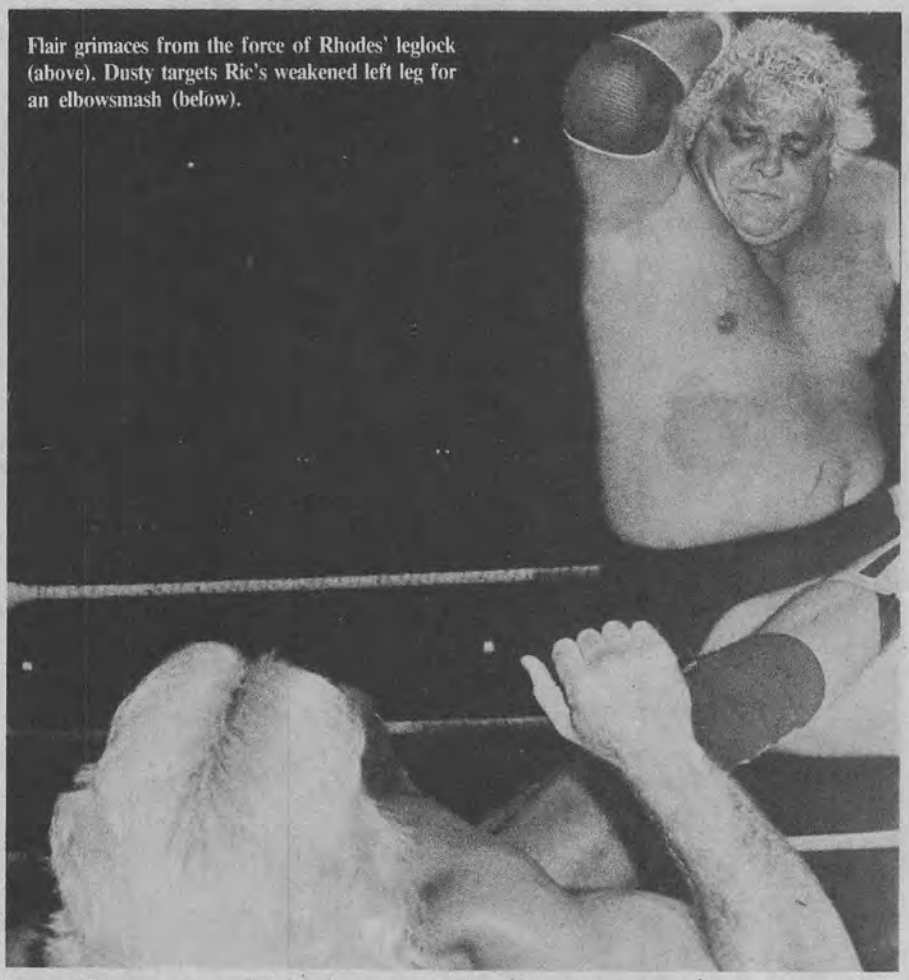
They react to my style in the ring very well. But when you face a man like Rhodes, there are certain things that you have to do in the ring that you normally wouldn't do under other circumstances.

"What I'm afraid of is that the fans wouldn't support me if I had to make the changes I feel are necessary if I am to wrestle Rhodes in a manner I see fit. I mean, judging from the mail I get, a lot of them don't even care to see me wrestle Rhodes in the first place."

In a recent match with Rhodes, however, Flair was able to bypass a lot of objections of his fans simply by going out of his own territory and into St. Louis.

"That St. Louis match was great," said Flair. "I was comfortable, I was confident, and best of all, I didn't have the pressure on me to please my fans. I was out of my territory, you might say, and I had total freedom to wrestle the way I wanted. I had nobody to please but myself."

In St. Louis, Flair almost pleased himself to the greatest extent possible: He nearly defeated Rhodes for the title. Dusty



Flair grimaces from the force of Rhodes' leglock (above). Dusty targets Ric's weakened left leg for an elbowsmash (below).

himself was unavailable for comment, but a spokesman denied that Flair was ever close to winning the title. In any event, reporters from *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* observed that, indeed, Flair had come very close to ousting Rhodes from the top spot.

"Yeah, I sure did come close," howled Flair, breaking into a broad smile as he recalled details

(Continued on page 52)

Flair vs. Snuka

(Continued from Page 34)

Watching the two men wrestle can be a frightening experience. It's a terrifying exhibition of wrestling ferocity. There is no such thing as defense. Two savage assaults collide. They pummel each other mercilessly until one can no longer tolerate the agony. No matter who wins or loses, both men suffer brutalizing injury.

Jimmy Snuka and Ric Flair will go to unimagined lengths to do one another harm. Can they survive the brutality?

This magazine has learned that the doctor did not exaggerate either man's condition. Flair and Snuka risk permanent injury to muscles, ligaments and joints. In their present conditions, any serious injury is a strong possibility. As the doctor told us, "I hate to put odds on something like this, but I'd have to say there's a 50-50 chance one of them—or both—will be confined to a wheelchair within seven years."

The war goes on. No one really understands why. It doesn't really matter. All that's important is Flair and Snuka will continue their relentless combat. The only thought more frightening than that is thinking about how it will end. □

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RIC FLAIR

(Continued from page 50)

Rhodes seeks the approval of the St. Louis fans before painfully twisting Flair's leg. In St. Louis he will get it; in the Mid-Atlantic he would not. Ric's popularity in the Carolinas could ultimately harm his career.

of the match. "I was all over Rhodes like a panther. There were times I snagged him in a headlock or something, and he was just totally helpless. I'm convinced that if I had another shot at him like that I could steal away his belt!"

Again, though, consideration of the fans comes into play. If he is going to make a play for the title, what about the fans?

"Well, like I say, I love my fans here in the Carolinas," said Flair. "But it's a strange thing. They're my fans, and they're the best thing that you could hope for anywhere. But I just don't feel completely comfortable wrestling in front of my fans.

"It's not that they demand too much out of me, but it's just that they are so devoted, that I really feel I owe it to them to provide the kind of performance that they came for. If I have to alter my style one bit because I'm in the ring with a champion who is putting his title on the line, I feel that I am cheating them from the match they expect out of me.

"By the same token," continued Flair, "if I step into the ring with the champion, I owe it to myself to try to get that title. A championship shot doesn't come up every day, so when they do, I really feel that I should make the best of it."

This is Flair's dilemma: the fans or the title. A choice in favor for either one would be a choice that degrades the other far more than is necessary. Yet, eventually Flair must come to grips with his problem and decide once and for all which choice he will ultimately reject. □

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Bruno Goes Berserk

(Continued from Page 21)

"Like a prelim bum," said Bruno. "He forgot everything I ever taught him."

Or did he? According to Zbyszko, his behavior during but I'd hate to see him in a wheelchair the rest of his life."

"That creep said that about me?" growled Bruno. "Dog-gone, he'll pay for that, the lousy creep."

Despite his pained hurt, Sammartino was not the initial aggressor. That is, until Zbyszko flailed him with a brutalizing succession of body blows. Punches, kicks, scratches. the match reflected years of observing similar actions by Bruno.

"That rulebreaker called me a bum? Guy can't wrestle within the rules. You saw what happened in previous bouts," said Zbyszko.

In this particular bout, Zbyszko, after battering Bruno with punches, fled the ring as Sammartino's anger intensified.

"Coward," shouted Bruno.

Whatever Zbyszko's spinal color, his mind performed wondrous feats. Zbyszko slipped under the ropes,

Very rarely will Bruno Sammartino be driven to inflicting so much punishment on an opponent. Larry Zbyszko brings out a dark side of the former WWF champion. Above: With Zbyszko's leg entangled in the ropes, Bruno drives his knee into Larry's throat. Below: Referee Dick Kroll and Arnold Skoaland pull Bruno away.

Larry grabs Bruno from behind the neck and drives his head into the ring apron. Much of the battle took place outside the Madison Square Garden ring.

followed by Bruno. When Zbyszko re-entered the ring, he had already positioned himself in a better fighting stance than Bruno, crawling through the ropes.

"He could use any lousy trick he wants," said Bruno. "It won't help the bum."

Finally, Bruno could not contain his rage. Something snapped. Observers of Bruno Sammartino since he first broke in could not remember a rage like this. He simply went berserk.

"I don't know, something went crazy inside me," said Bruno. "I saw red and wanted to kill him, wanted to kill that creep and pay him back for everything he did to me and all his fans.

"I'm not happy about what I did. I'm ashamed. Really I am."

Referee Dick Kroll ws barely able to restrain Bruno as the former WWF champion choked Zbyszko, banging his skull against the canvas.

The end was sad, almost tragic. Bruno Sammartino disqualified. No footnote could end that simple statement of hateful obsession. Once again, a bitter feud engulfs two fine men.

Bruno Sammartino, disqualified. Larry Zbyszko, rule-breaker. Need anything further be added? □

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HARLEY RACE

(Continued from Page 31)

Though the Von Erichs presently pose a major problem for Race, he insists he will not let them blow the opportunity to become a seven-time champion.

towards my title, and I intend to be successful."

Couldn't Race just sidestep the Von Erichs and wrestle somebody else?

"Well, I suppose I could," he explained, "but I have a very deliberate plan outlined. Like I said, this is a major step in the plan. It is important to the integrity of my seventh title reign that I do it this way. As far as I'm concerned, I'm going to do it properly, or not at all. Right now, this is the way to do it properly."

In the meantime, Harley Race continues to have trouble slipping by the Von Erich brothers. Yet he perseveres in the face of seemingly unbeatable odds.

"You know, I think I have a handle on my problem with these guys," says Race. "I'm developing my new style bit by bit. I've reached a point now where my new style is clashing with my old because of the level of opponent I am beginning to tackle. It is simply a matter of being able to adapt more quickly to my new set of holds, maneuvers, and counters. Once I do that, things will come a lot easier, and anyone who steps into the ring with me had better watch out."

If nothing else, Harley Race is to be commended for his awesome diligence in the face of huge odds. If anyone is able to overcome the record of Thesz, Race is the man to do it. ☐

RINGSIDE

(Continued from page 10)

his own. I'm proud to call Mr. Wrestling II my friend. And I plan to make him proud of me by winning the championship."

"Pez is a great kid and the National belt would be a real plus for him." Wrestling II said. "Besides, if he wins it, it would be nothing but a pleasure to challenge him for the title and have a good clean match. It is something you don't see much of anymore."

Zbyszko feels that II's help will only hinder Whatley's chances. "All he can learn from a has-been is old ways to lose," the champion said. "I'm not the least bit worried."

UPDATE: CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

As strange as it sounds, Paul Jones and Dory Funk Jr. are saying some very nice things about NWA tag team champions Jerry and Jack Brisco. For the past decade, Funk and Jones have been warring violently with the Briscos, but all that seems to have changed. The only competition between the two tag teams now is which is the most hated in the Mid-Atlantic area. "It's a delight to see them wrestling the way they are," Jones said. "It took them this long to realize that they won't go anywhere if all they do is cater to the fans. It's no great coincidence that they won the NWA tag team title right after they changed their attitude."

"They used to call Rick Steamboat and Jay Youngblood their good friends," Funk added. "But those ***good friends*** wouldn't even give them a shot at the title. The Briscos decided to do what they

(Continued on page 58)

Angered over some harsh statements by Jimmy Hart, Austin Idol has returned to the Memphis area. "The Universal Heartthrob" will soon battle Hart charge Man Mountain Link.

UPDATE: MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

"Universal Heartthrob" Austin Idol has returned to the Tennessee area after a long stint in the Southeast. Austin packed his bags and headed to Tennessee when he heard Jimmy Hart say some nasty things about him on televison. "Hart said that his flunkie Man Mountain Link could defeat me in less than two minutes," Idol said. "Obviously, Hart wanted me here. Why, I'm not quite sure. But he and Mountain ***Stink*** are in serious trouble."

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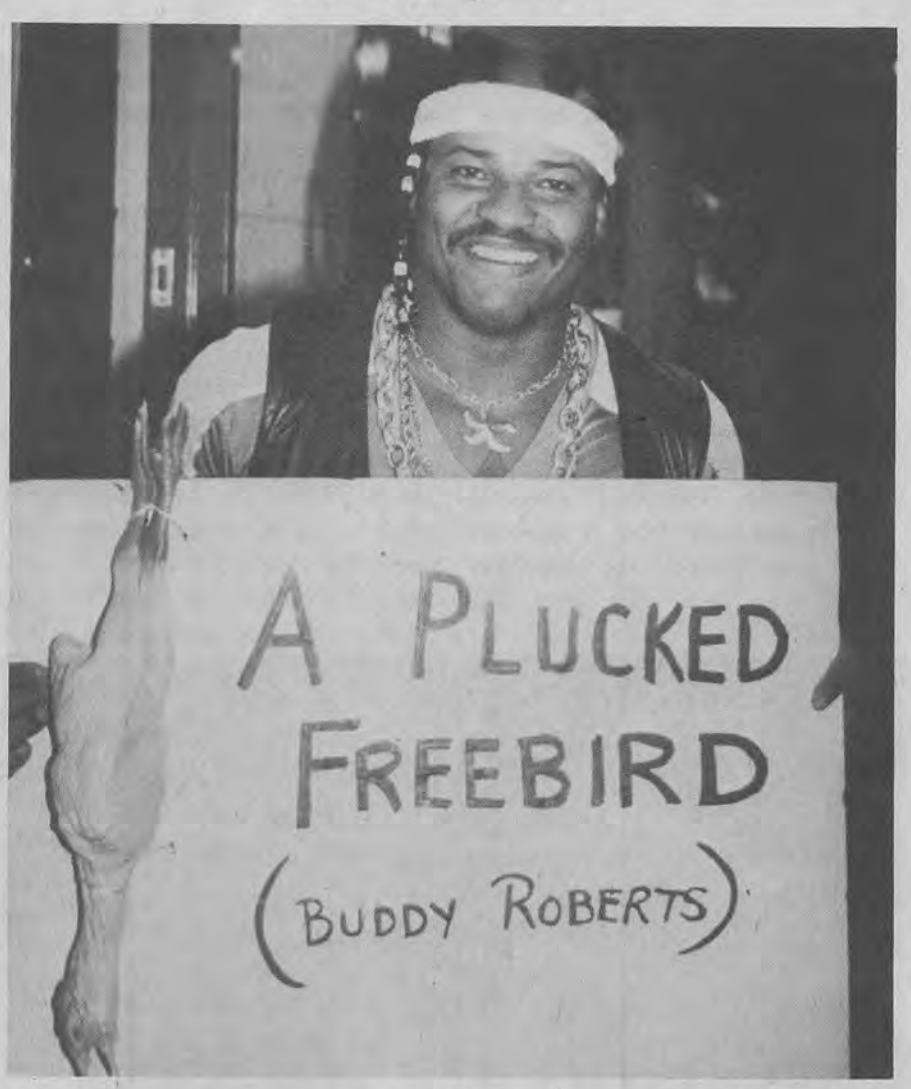
RINGSIDE

(Continued from page 57)



Iceman Parson's feud with Buddy Roberts is viewed by many as an indication that The Freebirds might be on the verge of splitting up.

had to do in order to be successful. That's the first sign of professionalism and maturity they have ever shown."

UPDATE: DALLAS, TEXAS

Since losing the World Class six-man tag team title to the Von Erich brothers, rumors have been spreading throughout the state that Michael Hayes has grown discontent with his Freebird partners, Buddy Roberts and Terry Gordy, and plans to replace them. Hayes assures us that the rumor is false. But why then is Terry Gordy teaming with Jim Garvin on a semiregular basis, and why then is Roberts involved in a solo feud against Iceman Parsons?

"All very easy to explain," Hayes says. "First of all, Gorgeous Jim Garvin is one of our family. He is not an official Freebird, but daddy, you cannot get closer. We enjoy teaming with him on occasion. We trust him. As for Buddy and Parsons, so what! If they want to mix it up, fine. That doesn't mean we're splitting. I wrestle Parsons on occasion and so does Terry. If the Von Erichs wrestle in singles matches, you don't yell that they're splitting up. If the press would stick to reporting the news and not creating ugly rumors, we'd all be better off!" ☐

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MIL MASCARAS

(Continued from Page 23)

Dory's eyes bulge as he sees Jerry Brisco's partner heading toward the action (above). Mascaras wisely keeps Dory away from the opposing corner, where he would surely receive help from Terry (below).

they uphold the highest standards of professional wrestling.

"When Jerry phoned me and explained his dilemma to me, I thought for a few seconds. To be honest, I was still hesitant to commit myself. But then I began realizing what would have happened if Jerry did not have a partner.

"Of course, you know that the Funks would have accused the Briscos of cowardice and I cannot abide listening to lies. People might believe the Funks and lose respect for a pair of wonderful wrestlers like Jack and Jerry Brisco.

"And you do know that once men like the Funks gain credence, people listen closer to what they say. If people believe their foolish lies and believe that the Briscos are

cowards, then what is to stop people from further believing something the Funks might say about other wrestlers, even myself?

"So I realized I had to commit myself to this feud. The Briscos and myself share certain attitudes toward wrestling and once the Funks get away with saying things about them, they can go after me. I firmly believe the best defense is a good offense. Besides, I consider the Briscos friends."

Brisco and Mascaras celebrate their disqualification victory over the Funks. Jack would be proud.

Terry and Dory welcomed the unexpected partner.

"Well, I can tell he's a little outta shape," said Dory Jr. "You can tell, he's got a pot belly. Now I don't know if I'm positive that it's Jack under the mask, like Terry is, because it's hard to tell. Both Jack and Mascaras are so outta shape, so pitiful, I don't know how you can tell 'em apart."

Jerry and Mil blended their skills with stunning precision. After absorbing a beating, the Funks resorted to rulebreaking and lost by disqualification.

"Well, this should shut them up for a while," said Jerry in the dressing room. He turned to Mil and nodded. Mil nodded back. Verbal thanks weren't necessary.

Not between brothers. □

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PRESS CONFERENCE

(Continued from page 25)

outlook on life now. I can better accept victory and defeat. Once you've tasted victory, you know there's a flip side, see? There's no such thing as just winning because without losing, well, you see you

Rich poses proudly with his NWA championship belt (above) after his hard-fought victory over Harley Race in Augusta, Georgia (opposite right). Race regained the belt five days later in Gainesville, Georgia.

"I want the NWA title back. I got kinda used to wearing it. But I'm going to do it in an orderly fashion, I'm gonna be persistent without being obsessive."

need both. Unless you can put both in their proper perspective, you're gonna end up a basket case. And I want to hold onto myself and keep myself in a proper perspective.

KING: Did winning the Georgia heavyweight title mean as much as winning the NWA title?

RICH: Not quite, but it was important. It was in Georgia where I first really got a following and where so many of my fans are. So it was like a homecoming, to win a title like that. Really, it was a wonderful feeling, really great.

APTER: What are your plans now?

RICH: First of all, to enjoy life a little, to breathe a little, to have fun. Oh, I want the NWA title back. I got kinda used to wearing it, know what I mean? But I'm gonna do it in an orderly fashion, I'm gonna be persistent without being obsessive. That's about all I can do.

KING: What's that?

RICH: Try my very best. Who can ask for more than that from another human being? □

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LOOKING AT...

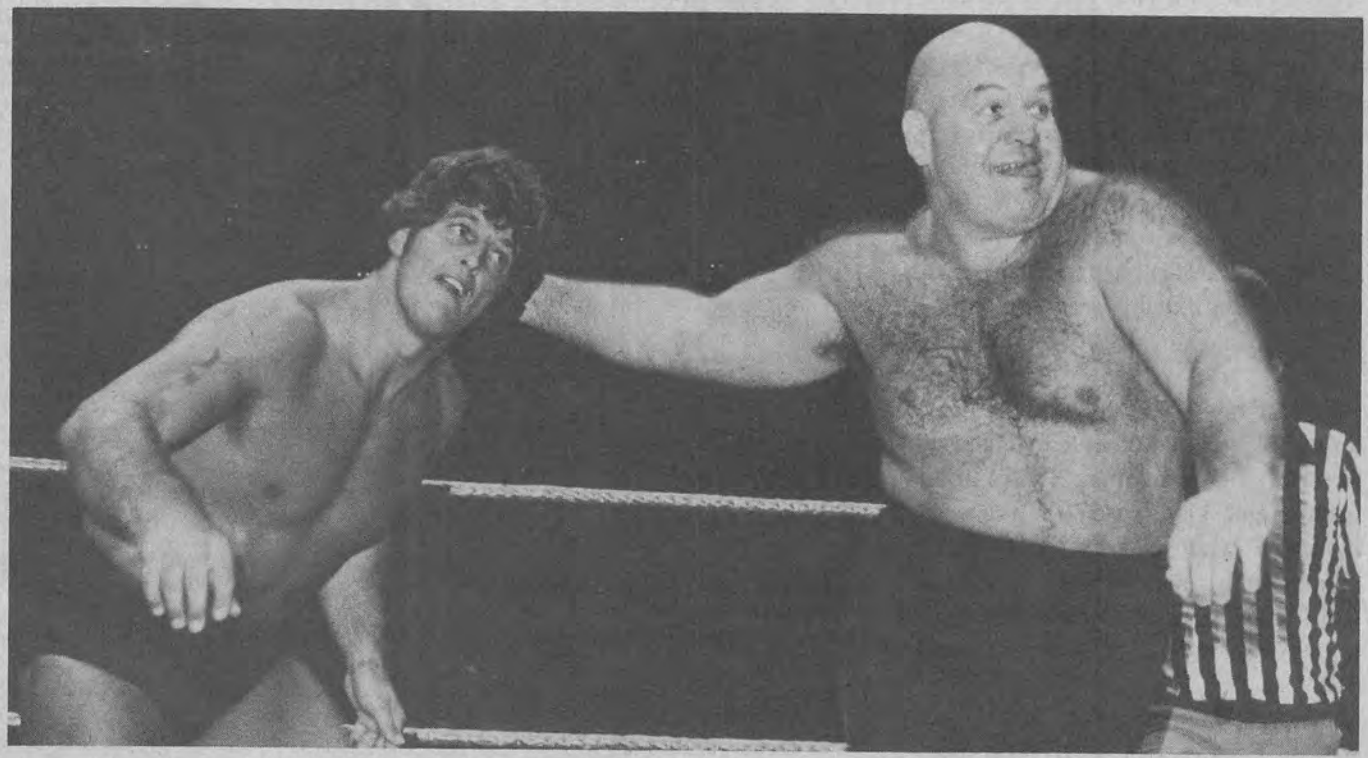
Matt Brock:

NEVER FORGET THE first time I met him.

I was eating dinner in a cute little Italian joint on West 10th Street. Just as I bit into my pasta, I hear this commotion behind me. A lot of commotion. Too much commotion for me. Last time I was at this joint, a guy's finger ended up in a Caesar salad. So ol' Matt, not being one to look for trouble, started sliding down in his chair, grabbing a piece of bread with him.

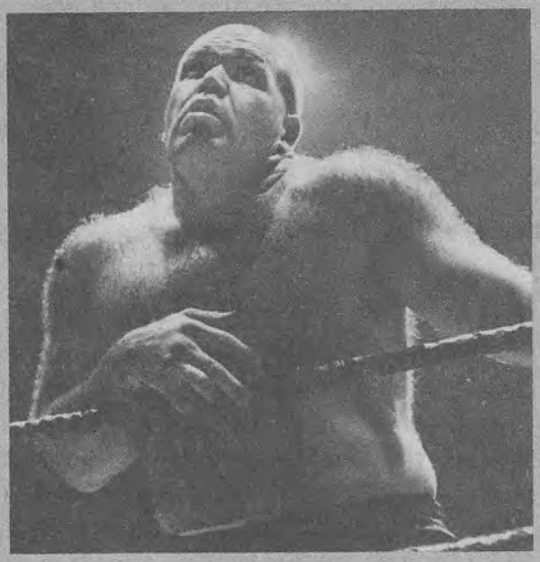
But it wasn't real trouble. It was George "The Animal" Steele requesting a table. Only problem was, Steele didn't want a table to sit at. He wanted to eat a table. Fact of the matter is, Steele wanted to eat a table where a distinguished gray-haired couple sat. I whirled and saw Steele munching on a checkered tablecloth as this couple turned white. It took five waiters to get Steele out.

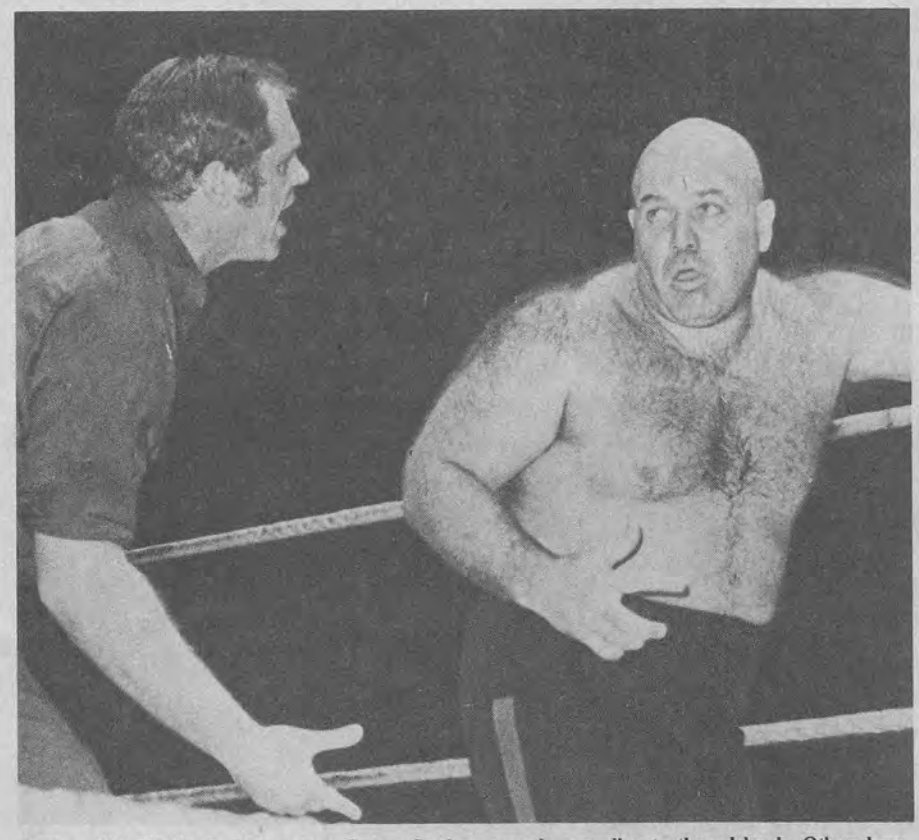
I don't think there's anyone



With tongue squeezed between his teeth, George Steele takes Tony Garea for a ride across the ring. Do we see a little of ourselves in the Animal?

GEORGE STEELE





Referee Dick Kroll tries to convince George Steele to wrestle according to the rulebook. Others have tried.

stranger than Steele. Even my Uncle Mort the tailor, who swallows needles and hums "Moonlight Serenade" simultaneously. Steele's even stranger than him. But why?

I always wondered about how George Steele got the way he did. Was there some horrible accident causing extensive brain damage? I dismiss that one since Steele has no other scars. Was it some dreadful psychological trauma? Maybe.

Then I stopped wondering, quelled my journalistic curiosity, and accepted him as a full-fledged madman. And he *is* a full-fledged madman. Whatever's upstairs is totally and completely deranged.

Still, "The Animal" has appeal and I don't think it has anything to do with pity. More horror. People are so terrified of the man and his violent unpredictability that they simply don't know what to make of him. They aren't surprised by anything he does.

But there is something substantial to Steele. Maybe it's like looking into a mirror of our own souls. Maybe we see part of ourselves in Steele. Maybe we see a life without reason. A life without control. A mind pushed beyond the very limits and into another dimension so alien to us, we cannot cope.

So we scorn him. We call him names. We make fun. We try to hide behind our own purported superiority when, in fact, we are merely cowering behind our own fears.

Perhaps we all know, deep down, what happens the moment we accept Steele. Maybe, myself included, the prospect terrifies us and drives us away.

Maybe all of us, deep, deep within our gut, know that to accept Steele and refrain from scorn, we will be confronting a dark chamber of our own souls.

Just maybe. And then, who's the real Animal? □

THE LAST WORD

Got a comment or point of view you want to share with other readers? Send your letters to:

LAST WORD
BOX 48
ROCKVILLE CENTRE, NY 11571

THANK YOU FOR THE COLOR

I want to thank everyone involved with *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* magazine and your latest publication, *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual.* Sometimes the monthly *PWI* is sold out by the time I make it to my local newsstand, and I miss seeing some important stories and features. The Annuals give me an opportunity to catch up on anything I might have missed.

What I would really like to thank you for, though, is your fabulous color section. Other wrestling magazines print color, but the quality of color in your magazine is far superior to that of any other wrestling publication. I particularly enjoyed the posed shot of Ric Flair in your Summer 1983 issue.

I do have one request: more color action photos. The color action in your very first *PWI Annual*, the Spring issue, was superb. I would like to see more color action photography from the excellent *PWI* photographers. Thank you.

MARIE WOODARD
Charlotte, NC

[Editor's note: Thank you for your compliments, Marie. You'll be pleased to find that this issue of PWI Annual *contains three peak-action shots from some of the most brutal feuds of the past few years. And if you like color, as we're sure you do, you'll want to keep an eye out for a brand-new magazine from the editors of* Pro Wrestling Illustrated: Wrestling '83. *This will be a color-packed magazine featuring all of the same award-winning writers and photographers who make* PWI *the most popular wrestling magazine in the world. More than featuring plenty of color,* Wrestling '83 *will offer a totally new concept in wrestling journalism. Look for it on your newsstands during the first week of October.]*

BACKLUND WOULD LOSE

Everywhere I go these days, wrestling fans are talking about Bob Backlund's title. I agree that since he has worn the belt, Backlund has brought disgrace to the WWF. He refuses to wrestle scientific opponents and he rarely wrestles out of the northeastern United States.

Backlund's worthlessness is proven by the story printed in your Summer 1983 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual* ("Superfly Snuka Bombards The WWF: Can Bob Backlund Recover From This Hideous Beating?"). That match took place when Snuka was a hated rulebreaker. Now that he is a fan favorite, Snuka is a better wrestler than ever before. If Backlund was taken out of the ring on a stretcher after his first match with Snuka those long months ago,

WWF champion Bob Backlund is strapped to a stretcher following his Madison Square Garden match with Jimmy Snuka last year. Now that Snuka has become a scientific wrestler, reader Richard Moller feels he should receive another title shot.

how well do you think he would do today? Backlund would lose his title for sure.

RICHARD MOLLER
York, PA

ENJOYS THE COLUMNS

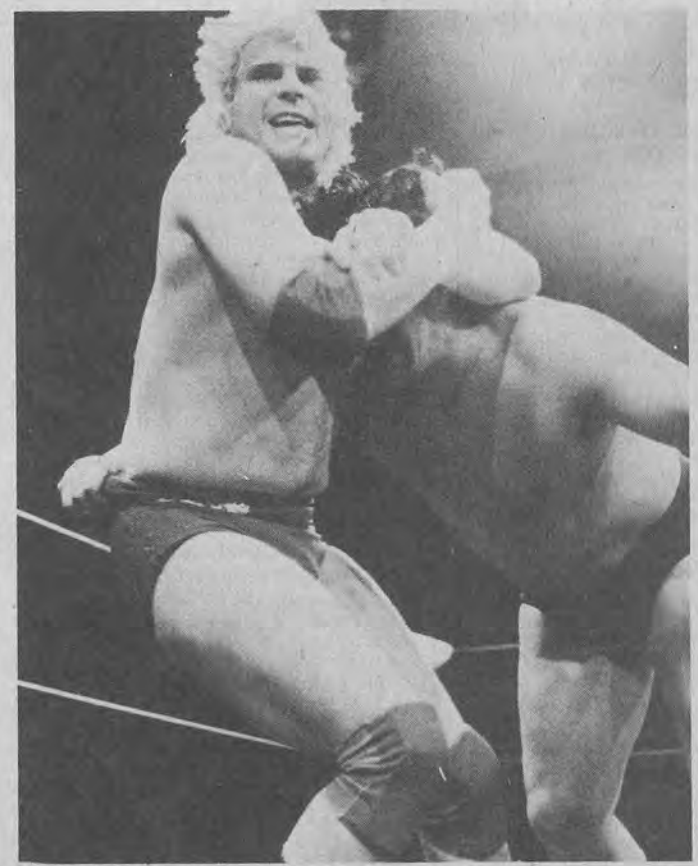
I enjoy every issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* and the new *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual.* I suppose everyone like the Annuals for different reasons, but I particularly like seeing columns from past issues.

I think breaking down the Summer 1983 issue into four sections and concentrating on four wrestlers—Hulk Hogan, Jimmy Snuka, Tommy Rich, and Ric Flair—was a great idea. I was surprised to learn that in Craig Peters' "In Focus" column, he had written about three of those wrestlers, but had never written about Hulk Hogan.

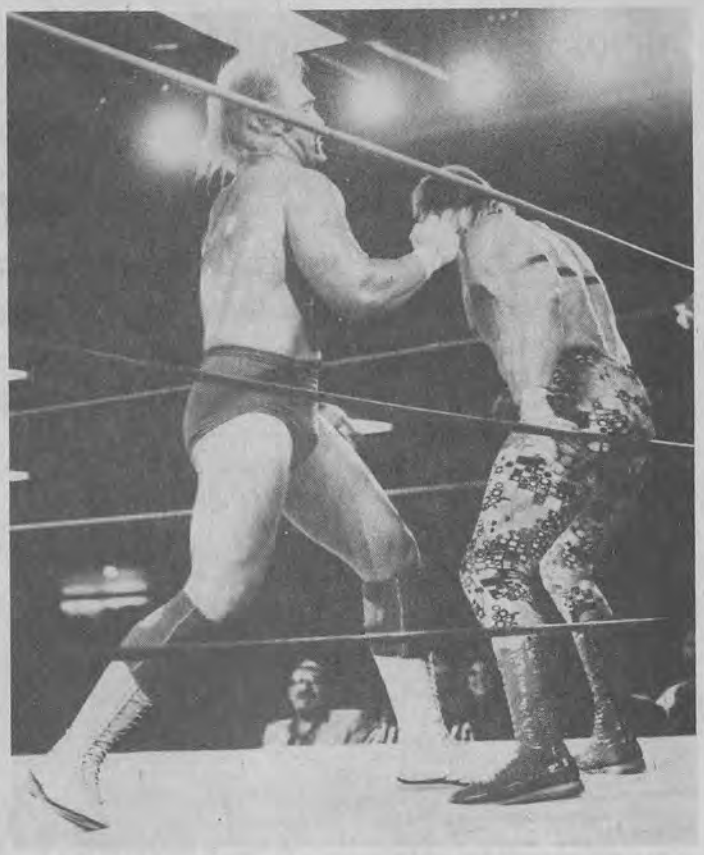
I was also surprised to read the words of Peters' predecessor, Gary Morgenstein, regarding Hogan: "He's a coward who'll run at the first sign of real trouble." No wonder Morgenstein doesn't write for *PWI* anymore!

Hogan has never run from any trouble in his life. He's the bravest, strongest, most capable wrestler in the entire sport. It's his opponents who run from him. I resent any statements to the contrary.

EDDIE OLDS
Minneapolis



Tommy Rich, one of the four featured wrestlers in the Summer 1983 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual,* applies a headlock on Ashura Hara during a match in Japan.



Hulk Hogan slams his right fist into the side of Jesse Ventura's head. Reader Delores Gumpbal was fascinated by the manner in which *PWI Annual* traced the evolution of Hogan's career in the Summer 1983 issue.

AN INTERESTING ANALYSIS

What I found very fascinating about the Summer 1983 *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Annual* was reading through the sections on Tommy Rich, Ric Flair, Jimmy Snuka, and Hulk Hogan, following the progress of their careers as told by the feature stories reprinted from past issues of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated.*

The best case was Hogan. In the "Press Conference" section, Hogan comes off as a pompous individual, pleased more with his attraction to the opposite sex and his mammouth proportions than his skills as a wrestler.

On to the feature "The Incredible Hulk Hogan: I Will Control Wrestling In The '80s!" where we find that Hogan has made a discovery of sorts, that he is, indeed, a fine wrestler. At this point in his career, he still displayed the flagrant self-love that acted as a barrier between himself and the brass ring of the sport, a world championship.

Finally, in "Hulkmania!" Hogan seemed to have it all together. He was still obviously self-confident about his skills and looks, but it was a statement of fact rather than a boast.

Thank you for offering this perspective on Hogan, and the rest of the featured wrestlers in the last issue.

DELORES GUMPBAL
Decatur, IL □

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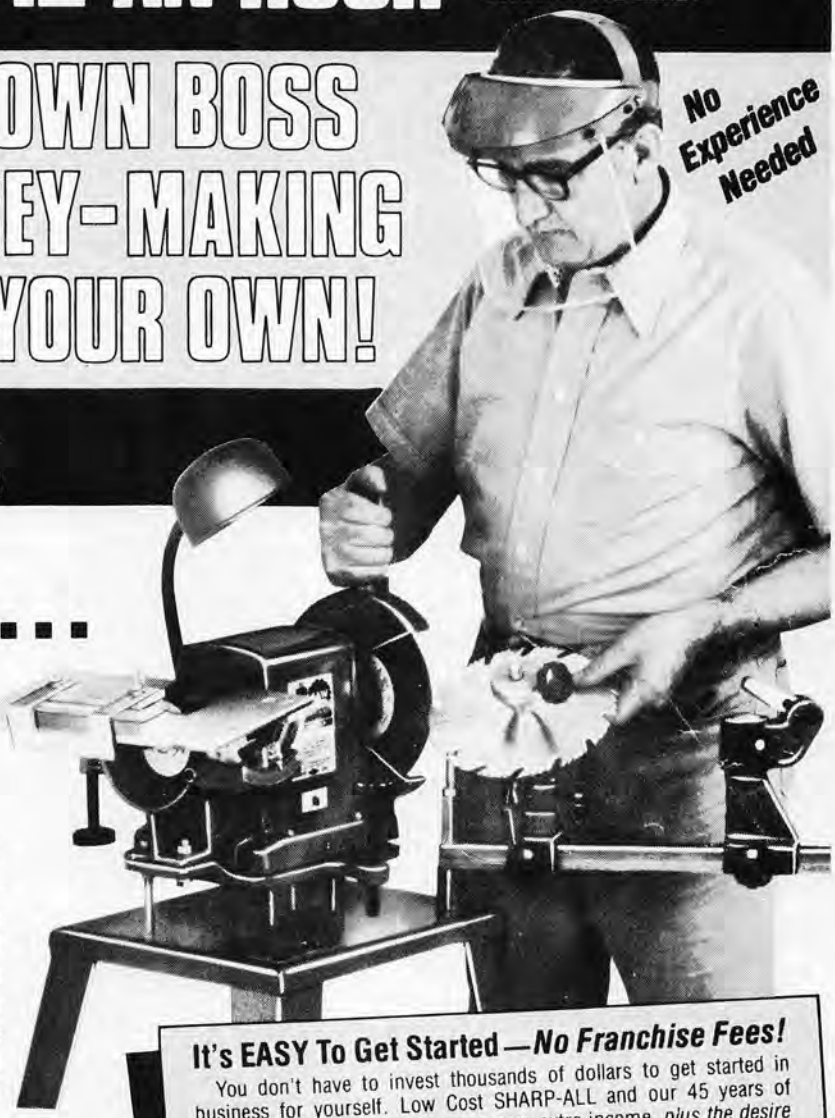

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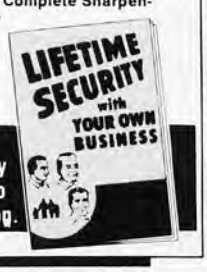

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